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FIRST THINGS

December 1990
Number Eight

A Monthly Journal of Religion and Public Life

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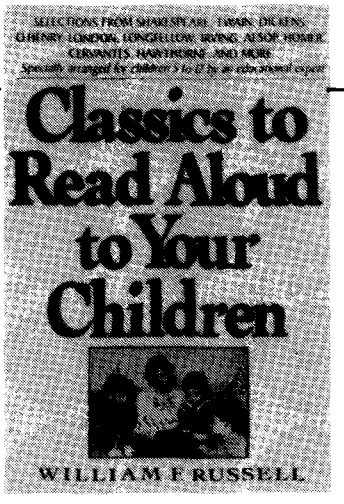

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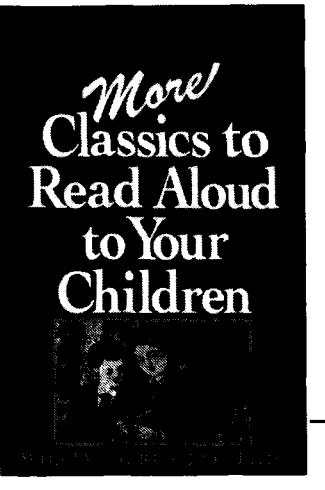

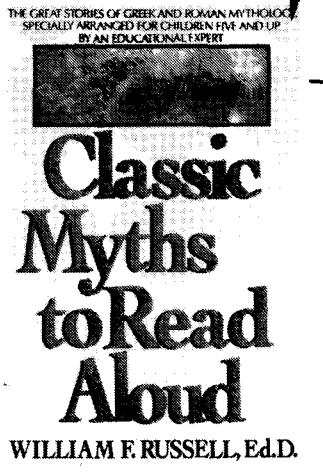
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FIRST THINGS

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Faith and Intellectual Rigor

Peter Berger describes well the tension experienced by many Christians who value intellectual rigor ("Worldly Wisdom, Christian Foolishness," August/September). The temptation to succumb to the *Zeitgeist* is powerful as it offers recognition and affirmation from a secular community, often the object of missionary intent. Making Christianity intellectually credible is a dangerous prospect, not because it is impossible, but because of the compromises that one must make.

In the dialog between the historic culture of the church and the contemporary milieu, it has always appeared to me that those who rushed to make Christianity culturally and intellectually appealing to the present time were foolhardy. If the Scripture is correct, then the faith and its biblical foundation transcend time and culture, while contemporary thought is transitory, certain to change and fade. Why then seek to accommodate to something that will not withstand time's passage? The conflict between time and eternity is not limited to philosophical discussion, but is at the heart of the issues facing the decline of the American mainstream church today. The church must be wary of hitching its wagon to a bright, yet falling, star. The truth that Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever is not a pious platitude, but a key to the essentials of the faith, which transcend time and culture.

The Christian intellectual lives in the tension of this debate and conflict. The answer, though, is found in recognizing the changeable nature of secular thought forms which are attempts to find a stable conception of truth that lasts. This is the beauty of the Apostle Paul, who was able to converse with the thought forms of the day in the light of the truth that is found in Christ.

The Rev. Ed Brenegar
Elkins, WV

Palestine, not Israel

That Robert L. Wilken ("Jews, Christians, and the Land of Israel," August/September) can talk about the issues of the land of Palestine without any reference to the people who live on the land, the Palestinians, is astounding. Bloodless abstractions may create "theological toughmindedness," but they can also create bloody policies. If reference is to be made to the promise of the land, what about the promise of separation from the land because of the sins of the people?

The Rev. Robert H. Tucker
Houston, TX

Robert L. Wilken responds:

An earlier draft of my essay (a response to an earlier column by Michael Wyschogrod, "The Bishops and the Middle East," April) included a section on the Palestinians, but I decided to drop it because it was not directly pertinent to the issue at hand, Christian theological interpretation of the Hebrew prophets. But it is a matter dear to my heart and I have discussed the fate of Palestinian Christians in an article in the *Christian Century* ("From Time Immemorial? Dwellers in the Holy Land," July 30-August 6, 1986) and next year will publish a book on the Christian presence in the holy land entitled *Land Called Holy: The Palestine of Christian Memory* (Yale University Press).

FIRST THINGS *welcomes letters to the editor on matters pertaining to the journal and its contents. All letters are subject to editing for brevity and clarity.*

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FIRST THINGS
DECEMBER 1990

Civility and Permissions

"Who has been handing out these permission slips?" asks a writer of our acquaintance. He wants to know who determined that it is alright again to tell racist jokes in polite society, or to publish columns suggesting, none too gingerly, that Jews have excessive influence in American life. Who indeed?

The question eludes easy answer, the villains are hard to locate. But it does seem that there are Americans, including pundits, who think they got permission from somewhere or somebody to say and do things that most of us have for a long time thought forbidden. Of course, who does the forbidding is as elusive as who does the permitting. When it comes to manners and mores, it seems that attitudes reach a "critical mass" at which point it is generally understood that, to use a quaint phrase, certain things simply aren't done. Civilization depends upon obedience to the unenforceable. The difference between barbarians and those within the civilizational circle is that the former have to have the rules explained to them, or enforced against them. All children, for example, are by nature little barbarians. Civility does not come naturally.

Before getting to permissions issued for racism and anti-Semitism, a measure of clarity is needed on the unnatural nature of civility itself.

Discussing Dr. Johnson's lexical labors, Boswell wrote: "He would not admit *civilization* but only *civility*. With great deference to him, I thought *civilization*, from *to civilize*, better in the sense opposed to *barbarity* than *civility*." As almost always, Dr. Johnson's intuition was entirely correct. Like Boswell, we may be inclined to think that civilization is the more substantive thing. It's *there*, after all, right in the history books. Greek civilization, Roman civilization, maybe even American civilization. You can put dates on a civilization, you can chronicle it, calculate its ups and downs, and count its numbers. Not so with civility. It is not a thing but a way of being. It is the way of being opposed to barbarity. It is the virtue of which civilization is the product.

One definition of civility is "deference to the social order befitting a citizen." But Webster's Third International pronounces that definition "obsolete." The current definition of civility, we are instructed, is "bare observance of the forms of accepted social behavior or adequate perfunctory politeness." Dr. Johnson would not have agreed, and the difference is a measure of how far we have declined from the wisdom of Dr. Johnson. When barbarians are writing dictionaries, it is little wonder that civility becomes a pejorative. And little wonder that those who relish feisty public discourse dismiss appeals to civility as an intolerable cramping of their style. Far from being a virtue, civility is viewed as a soft, timorous, tepid, and altogether wimpish trait that real men eschew lest their manhood be brought into question.

The Latin *civilitas* means the science and habits of politics. It is the basic prerequisite for living together in a humane social order. It is a disposition of respect and generosity toward others. It is what liberality used to mean before it became associated with liberalism turned nasty. Civility is what prevents us from being beastly to one another, which is to say it is what prevents us from becoming beasts. In short, it is deference to the social order befitting a citizen. Fortunately, and contrary to Webster's Third, such civility is not yet obsolete. It is under severe strains.

Of course civility, never being natural, is always under strain. It is not nostalgia for an allegedly unstrained past that leads us to think that the attack on civility has escalated in recent years. Somebody does seem to be handing out permission slips for the violation of protocols, taboos, interdictions, and unenforceable rules that once seemed more secure. When we say "in recent years," we refer, perhaps predictably, to what turned out to be in many respects a moral slum of a decade, the 1960s. It began then, but it was to get worse. Sundry liberationisms were aggressions by the natural against the artificial and, therefore, presumably oppressive constrictions of ordered community.

The attack on communities of civility was led by legions. The celebrity corps of societal chic declined membership in the earthly *civitas* altogether, preferring to trip through the heavenly cities of pharmaceutical bliss. Then there is that most basic community, the family. The "good family man"

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(remember the phrase?) was replaced by the swinger, or at least by the searcher demanding fulfillment of his right to sexual satisfaction. Many who passed as leaders of minorities gave up on the communal aspiration to equality and specialized in intimidation and the politics of resentment. Homosexual activists became increasingly brutal in defense of the right to be effete. And radical feminists were astonishingly successful in proving that they really are not ladies. In reaction to all this and more, some supposed champions of traditional values have abundantly demonstrated that they have slight respect for the tradition of civility. In the current *Kulturkampf* it seems that all combatants are in possession of permission slips, and the rules of war, never mind propriety, have been effectively suspended.

Nevertheless, there are some permissions that have not yet been granted, or at least not beyond the point of retrieval. Among them are racism and anti-Semitism. There are troubling signs, however, that some citizens have picked up a rumor that these interdictions, too, are no longer in force. We all have a deep stake in relieving them of that illusion.

Racism and anti-Semitism are notoriously hard to define, and both terms have been further debased by reckless abuse. A person is not a racist or anti-Semite because he tends to have problems with blacks or Jews. All of us like some people more than others, and it is a delusion of a debilitated liberalism to think that we encounter individuals entirely without reference to the groups and communities of which they are part. We cannot be a society that cherishes "roots" and celebrates displays of group pride and, at the same time, insist upon the public pretense that our differences make no difference. Before the law, our differences should make no difference, but, fortunately, only a small part of life is ruled by the law. Genuine pluralism is not pretending that our differences make no difference. Genuine pluralism is dealing with our differences within the bonds of civility.

There are other things that racism and anti-Semitism are not. It is not racism for whites, along with many blacks, to worry out loud about a black underclass that has severed its connections with the larger society, has lost the institutions of work and family, has resigned itself to a future of crime and dependency, and is cruelly deceived by a civil rights leadership that blames such misery on white racism. Nor is it anti-Semitism to argue in public that Israel has a disproportionate influence on American foreign policy, that American Jews are wrong to support that disproportionate influence, that Jews and Jewish organizations should show more respect for Christian beliefs and institutions, and that those who make these arguments should not be charged with being anti-Semitic. Without embracing these propositions, one can agree that they are all eminently debatable, and can be debated within the bonds of civility. Which is to say, they should be debated with care.

When, then, does the criticism of blacks become racism and of Jews become anti-Semitism? Expect no indisputable answer here. It has to do in large part with tone and context and perceived intention. There is an almost aesthetic dimension to it—"I know it when I hear it." We should not be surprised by that, for there is a stronger connection between the aesthetic and moral than is usually thought. Evil can disguise itself in the form of beauty, but the form of ugliness is almost always a sure giveaway. Racism and anti-Semitism also come into play when people employ the familiar language of racists and anti-Semites, especially when it is employed by people who, we have every reason to believe, know the history of such language. These evils are also in play when the claim to being candid thinly veils the teaching of contempt. They are powerfully in play when the appeal is for "us" to do something about an alien "them."

"Blacks are a drag on American society." "Jews have too much influence in American public life." Times are changing. Somebody is giving out permission slips allowing these and similar sentiments in our public discourse. These statements, if not indisputably racist and anti-Semitic, are deeply suspect, to say the least. What is the intention that informs such statements? If one accepts them as true, what follows? How, for instance, should people go about reducing the "too much" influence of Jews? One relatively innocent-sounding answer is to say that non-Jews should do a better job of exercising public influence. In the past, that was not the main answer given by people who worried out loud about the influence of Jews. That is a past that we must keep ever present to our minds. That Jews and Judaism are socially conspicuous is nothing new. The reasons for that are maddeningly various, and certainly not untouched by the mystery of divine election. That the conspicuousness of Jews and Judaism constitutes a problem that is to be somehow remedied, however, is an opinion peculiar to anti-Semites.

As for the statement about blacks, it and its variants are increasingly encountered in public discourse. About Jews people complain about "too much," about blacks they complain about "too many." Planned Parenthood, for instance, is much exercised about drags on our society, especially welfare drags. It advances the argument, variously phrased, that the answer to black poverty is to reduce, through abortion and other measures of population control, the number of black people, or at least of black poor people. And again there is the problem of a superannuated black leadership that has turned the cause of civil rights into quotaized schemes of racial preference, mocking the noble dream of a society in which people are judged not by the color of their skin but by the content of their character. The radical posturings of such professional black leaders have become a drag, and a cause

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of anger among those Americans who still pay them any mind.

Very recently, some attention has been given more reflective black thinkers who make the case that schemes of racial preference disserve the dignity of blacks and invite the hostility of whites. Those who make that case are few in number, however, and they are viciously derided, especially by black academics, many of whom owe their positions to the schemes in question. Black thinkers who have disenthralled themselves from the orthodoxy of collective anger and racial preference have, to date, received slight support from the leaders of what is unquestionably the most important institution in black America, the church. Clergy in the most impacted communities of the underclass are in the best position to know the human devastation that has been wrought. Unless they help all of us to think anew about race relations in America, there is no end in sight to the deepening of black despair and the hardening of white indifference. In fact, indifference (as in "benign neglect") will begin to look good as a growing number of politicians, and not only in places such as Louisiana, begin to harvest public resentment against the incessant claims of a black leadership that refuses to face up to the calamity for which it is in significant part responsible.

The civil interdictions against racism and anti-Semitism had everything to do with tragic histories. Two words tell the story: Slavery and Holocaust. Blacks for more than a hundred years and Jews for forty-five years were perceived as the victims par excellence. They were owed. They were owed sympathy and respect and, in the case of blacks, assistance. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel said of great human evils, "Some are guilty, all are responsible." However vaguely and incoherently, it was understood that we as a society, we as a civilization, were implicated in the great evils of slavery and the Holocaust. It is the nature of history, however, that it moves on, and even great evils recede into an ever more distant past. Victim status falls victim to the corrosions of time. Less and less does the invocation of Auschwitz silence criticism of Israeli policies; less and less do slave ships seem to have any plausible connection with cocaine babies in Bedford Stuyvesant.

Time is not the only corrosive of victim status. For victimhood to have social force, victims must be relatively few. In the last quarter century, the victimization industry has mushroomed and almost all Americans belong to a certified category of the massively wronged—Hispanics, American Indians, women, homosexuals, children, the elderly, and, perhaps inevitably, even white males. All have gotten a raw deal and demand reparations, entitlements, and that strange invention of this strangest of all centuries, governmental compassion. The trivializing of victimhood results in a society in which there is nobody to blame except everybody. It is a society of endless whining, recrimination, and cultivated discontent. We are very close to becoming such a society. If there is a discernible mood shift in public life today, it is that a growing number of Americans are saying, Enough already.

That mood shift could turn vicious. With respect to the original victims, blacks and Jews, we already witness the public peddling of permission slips to speak the previously unspeakable. It seems almost certain that the immunities of victim status cannot be revived. That may not be so bad. Victimhood, guilt, and even—keeping in mind Rabbi Heschel's distinction—responsibility for great evil are fragile foundations for civility. Civility is securely grounded not in the memory of great evil but in the aspiration to common good. We dare not forget that we are capable of great evil, but the "we" that dare not forget that includes all of us. It includes those who understand themselves to be victims. *Civilitas* assumes devotion to the *civitas*, and nobody is exempt from the obligations of decency required if that community is to continue.

Certain protocols and interdictions must be kept in place if the artifact of civilization, so radically dependent upon obedience to the unenforceable, is to survive and, beyond survival, to thrive. It is not guilt but historical experience that compels us to recognize the peculiar importance of the strictures against racism and anti-Semitism. In addition to their inherent repugnance, these are indulgences that have demonstrated a capacity to undo the civil order. They are not alone of course. As is all too evident in American society, there are many ways to destroy the fabric of public decency. But the still new thing is the testing of the taboos against racism and anti-Semitism. We have touched on some of the reasons for this change, but reasons are not justifications. This flirtation with the previously forbidden may be no more than a passing phase. None of us can know. Each of us can refuse to give permission.

Opinion

Drugs and the Face of Evil

William J. Bennett

One of the least understood aspects of the drug problem is the degree to which it is in the end a moral and spiritual problem.

I continue to be amazed at how often people I speak to in treatment centers refer to drugs as the great lie, the great deception, indeed as a product of the Great Deceiver. An astonishing number of people in treatment

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have described crack cocaine to me simply as "the Devil." This has come up too often and too spontaneously in conversation to be ignored.

You will know what I mean, then, when I say that in visiting treatment centers, prisons, inner-city communities, and public housing projects across the country over the past twenty-one months I've seen what I can only describe as the face of evil. Those people who doubt that there is evil in the world need to travel a few weeks with me on the drug circuit.

Recently a police officer told me about going into an apartment after receiving a complaint and finding there a four-year-old child and a one-year-old child. They had been in there by themselves for three days. The four-year old had been left by his mother to care for the one-year old. Now my wife and I have a six-year old and a one-year old at home. I know something about four-year olds and their capabilities. Babysitting is not one of them. I don't suppose that anyone would deny that for a four-year old to be left in charge of a one-year old for three days is not very wise child rearing. When the police entered and spoke to the children, the one-year old was still holding on to the hand of her older brother. And the little boy said, "This is my sister and my mother told me to take care of her and I will." The little boy was manfully trying to do his best. While the police were there, the mother came in with a roll of money in her hand. She had been out walking the streets to get the money to support her crack habit.

That's not the kind of story that's going to make the headlines or the evening news. But that's the kind of story that is being told too often every day in communities all over America. Child-abuse experts tell me that they think that much of the dramatic increase in child abuse and neglect is due to drugs.

You may have heard the story from the West Coast of a six-month-old child who died of an overdose of crack. How does a six-month old die of an overdose of crack? Because her mother or father, we're not sure which, inhaled crack and then, to quiet the baby, blew crack into the baby's mouth until the baby was destroyed.

Or you may have heard the story from Detroit of the woman who owed a debt to her drug dealer and handed over her thirteen-year-old daughter to the drug dealer in order to pay the debt.

If these kinds of incidents are not the face of evil in our time, I don't know what is. That is why a spiritual and a moral response is required. Those who believe that because of modernity the categories of right and wrong, of good and evil, no longer apply need to take a close, hard look at the drug problem. If one doesn't believe in the struggle of the *psychomachia*—what I was taught to recognize as the struggle between good and evil for possession of the human soul—then one might never get to the heart of this drug problem.

I think that the drug question, although serious in itself, is really symptomatic of a much wider problem. And that has to do with the neglect of the most important things. The most important things have to do with the teaching and passing on of certain true and time-honored values to our children. When we neglect these things, it doesn't matter what wealth or knowledge we have. For in neglecting the task of transmitting our fundamental values, we lose everything for which this country and our Judeo-Christian religious tradition stand. A recent news report in the *New York Times* on teenage health problems makes the point inadvertently, but very well:

> America's teenagers are plagued with an array of physical and emotional health problems that make them less healthy than their parents were at that age, the [National Association of State Boards of Education and the American Medical Association] Commission said today. The panel, including medical, health, and business leaders, said hundreds of thousands of adolescents and teenagers suffered from excessive drug use, unplanned pregnancies, sexually transmitted diseases, social and emotional problems that can lead to academic failure or suicide. As a result, many teenagers are unprepared to achieve successful lives as adults, the panel says. Unlike the problems of earlier generations, the Commission said, those of today's teenagers are rooted in behavior rather than in physical illnesses like infections and diseases. Excessive drinking, drug use, sex, and violence are major threats to the current generation.

Note that one sentence: "Unlike the problems of earlier generations . . . those of today's teenagers are rooted in behavior rather than in physical illnesses. . . ." So, having stated that teenagers' problems are rooted in behavior, what does the Commission recommend? It recommends that teenagers be guaranteed access to health services and that schools take on a larger role in improving their students' health. It says that schools should establish health centers as well as offer classes that go beyond customary hygiene lessons to include sex education. In other words, having pointed out that the problem is not, for the most part, a health problem, the Commission goes on basically to recommend better medical health as the solution.

Why is that? Because that's the only solution that the conventional wisdom—at least in some circles—understands. It understands physical health, but it does not understand spiritual health. The approach of the Commission indicates the intellectual poverty of modernity, with its reliance on technological, psychological, and governmental solutions for moral and spiritual problems. The evidence in this case is clear. Never has our scientific, technological, or governmental know-how been greater, and never has the condition of our young people been worse.

What's the answer? We need the decade of the nineties to be a time when once again we talk directly about right and wrong, about values and character, about

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education as the architecture of the soul. What our children need—and all one has to do is go to schools and talk to children to see it—is not for the most part medicine. Where medicine is needed, by all means let it be provided. But what these children need most is guidance. They need an example. They need moral principles. They need to know what is worthy of being loved and what is worthy of being defended.

If we wish to help our children, we need the courage to say in classrooms in this country—including the classrooms in our public schools—that there is a difference between right and wrong. And to say in those same classrooms that the greatest institution is the family, the family of husband and wife, male and female, joined. Schools are there, after all, to enlighten, not to obscure; to point people to a better way of life, not a worse way of life. That is true of the art and the music we present to our children as well. It is not an act of censorship to distinguish between a work of art or a piece of music that lifts the human spirit and one that degrades it.

Much now is settled in the wider world. During his visit here earlier this year, Lech Walesa reflected on the dramatic political revolutions occurring in countries all over the world. He reminded all of us that the job of social reconstruction is not finished once the right political system is established. To Americans in particular he said, "Please take care of this country. If you do not lead us, who will?" We have led the world in the aspiration for freedom, and much of the world has taken our cue and adopted our principles. Now comes the time for America to lead in an area beyond the political. We need now to show the world that we understand what it means to care for children.

William J. Bennett *recently resigned as Director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy.*

The Flag Amendment *Is* a Religious Issue

William Johnson Everett

The issue of a constitutional amendment to prohibit desecration of the American flag is currently on political hold, but it remains potentially very much alive. We need, therefore, to continue to think about it, even to think about it in ways we might not have considered before. It would be useful in particular to recognize that the proposed amendment not only challenges our existing protections of public speech but also our prohibitions of an established religion. To see the conflict as a religious issue opens some perspectives that are buried in an exclusive focus on its threat to freedom of speech.

The First Amendment begins with the phrase, "Congress shall make no law respecting the establishment of religion. . . ." This is the first restriction on governmental powers in defense of the rights of the people. Freedom of religion, speech, assembly, and the press will follow it. Were the framers trying to tell us something with this order? I believe they were. The flag controversy can help us retrieve their wisdom and clarify what is at stake in this controversy.

The first meaning of this phrase was that no existing Christian church would be granted support and supremacy through governmental action. This prohibition was extended to the states through the power of the Fourteenth Amendment in 1940, leading to the plethora of religion-state litigation since then.

Its second meaning is that "religion" *in any form* shall not be so established by government. The Supreme Court has been very reluctant to define "religion" for purposes of adjudication. It has handled the problem on a case-by-case basis lest some general definition actually establish, almost by accident, some form of religion itself.

However, when we look at the cases the Court has handled under the "free exercise of religion" clause, we see a wide net indeed, ranging from any theistic movement to conscientiously held convictions, as with objection to war. The doctors of the law are reluctant to use conceptions of religion developed under the free exercise clause to approach problems of establishment. The flag issue, however, forces us to ask whether a statute or amendment concerning the "desecration" of the flag (and sacralizing it by implication) constitutes an establishment of religion.

What kind of religion does the flag represent? The idea that a national or "civil" religion, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau put it, exists in America has been around at least since Alexis de Tocqueville. In recent years Robert Bellah, Sidney Mead, and others have developed compelling analyses of it. Texts like the Constitution and Declaration of Independence, places such as Gettysburg, saints such as Lincoln and King, times such as the Fourth of July, and symbols like the flag constitute a kind of sacred realm knitting Americans together around common loyalties and perspectives.

The flag has come to be a kind of sacred symbol within this civil religion. There is little doubt of that. The question is whether we should now cross the line from this freely cultivated patriotic piety to the coercive domain of government. Should the state guarantee the flag's sacral standing by force? Should it establish this part of the civil religion, with its other components sure to follow behind? To follow out the logic of disestablishment is to answer in the negative.

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This primary limit on state power stands at the heart of America's constitution—not the words on the old parchment, but the way we have come to constitute our public life in fact. This assumptive constitution holds that government shall derive its power and authority from "the people." This does not mean first of all that a popular majority should rule the multitude in the manner of a collective tyrant. If so, we would have a flag amendment today. The point of the Bill of Rights is precisely not to unleash a feverish majority but to preserve the inviolability of that peculiar domain we call "the public."

This means that the people's culture, opinion, and beliefs as well as the institutions that promote that complex public culture *precede* government. This underlying public culture must be free of governmental coercion. Its institutions shall be voluntary and governed by the minds and developed convictions of its citizens—both singly and in groups. This public culture is to shape the citizens who in turn shall shape government. Governments, in whose offices lie society's coercive powers, shall be controlled by the people rooted in their free public culture. Government shall serve the purposes derived from the arguments of that public and stand under its judgment.

The delicate point here is that government is to serve as an instrument for the majority's will with regard to the purposes set forth in the various constitutions of government, but the public realm itself must not be controlled by government or the will of the majority. Interpretations of the current controversy that only attend to free expression of individuals miss the wider truth that we must maintain the freedom of the public itself, and especially the powerful symbols and rituals undergirding it. Crucial to the freedom of this realm is the freedom of its symbols.

Underlying any vital public is a foundation of basic assumptions, beliefs, and established loyalties. A vital public rests on some kind of deep culture. Central to these cultural institutions are the religious bodies and their own rituals—that is, their symbolization and rehearsal of their ultimate loyalties. Religion, as many have observed, is the heart of any dynamic culture. From this deep culture arises the authority on which other institutions are based. This religious base serves to legitimate the society's structure of *authority*, but for that very reason must be removed from access to *power* and *coercion*.

Because of its long-range power, this religious culture undergirding the public realm must operate noncoercively. When cultural institutions seek to become coercive, they lose their capacity to transcend the interests of power. When governments seek to coerce culture, they swallow up the grounds for their own public legitimacy. Each distorts and corrupts the other, ending in their mutual degeneration. Our American Constitution rests on a delicate balance between these two dimensions of our life—between religion and government, between the public and the state, between authority and power.

The point is this: *The critical symbols of our ultimate loyalties should always be free of governmental intervention and coercion.* Government, whether or not it is the will of the majority, may not decide what is sacred and not sacred, what is orthodox and what is heretical. The basic beliefs of the people always must remain open to some Transcendence in terms of which governments themselves must be judged.

It is at this deep constitutional level that the proposal for a flag amendment strikes. It would lay the first brick in the establishment of a national religion. It is at this point that we must oppose it if we are to maintain the delicate balance of a free people, not to mention the profoundest insights of religions devoted to a transcendent God.

Even from a political standpoint, established religion corrupts the state, for it tends to absolutize the structures and policies of government. Under the cloak of the absolute—in this case, the Americanism symbolized by the flag—governments override all the other rights and liberties of the people, destroying the public realm itself.

From a religious standpoint, established religion corrupts religion, for it deprives it of its necessary openness to the Transcendent which stands beyond all partial powers. In this tradition, only God is sacred. God demands a free commitment and constrains us to separate our ultimate loyalties from our loyalties to the nation. It is this kind of cultural openness to the Transcendent that can finally rescue us from the delusion that we are the center and apex of the globe and of the universe.

Without this sense of transcendence, we cannot preserve a realm of public persuasion apart from government. These kinds of claims are central to most world religions and acutely so in the Jewish, Christian, and Muslim traditions, though they too have fallen prey to the temptation to confuse the purposes of a transcendent God with their own civil powers. From this perspective, a state-imposed sacral status is idolatry. Just as the First Amendment prohibits an established religion, so the First Commandment prohibits idolatry. The matter goes as deep as that.

Once we see the flag amendment as a kind of establishment, we see the enormous peril it poses not only for free citizens but for religious institutions as well. The imposition of flag ceremonies brought members of the Jehovah's Witnesses into court in the 1940s, ending with the Supreme Court's first ruling against this use of the flag. The Witnesses live with a positive command not to worship "graven images." They had to actively withdraw from flag salutes. What will happen today if the government seeks to impose a religion of the flag on the religious associations rooted in this biblical tradition? Do President Bush and other supporters really want to lead us into this attack on our own religious traditions in addition to our constitutional ones?

This is the line of questioning that proceeds from seeing the flag issue as a problem of religious establishment. It needs to be on our public agenda as we

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deal with the outcry for an amendment that will recur in the wake of the Supreme Court's consistent reading of the First Amendment. How we cast the issue and how we respond to it will be decisive for the religious and civil future of the country.

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Super Flumina Babylonis, or, Outside the Mainstream

Paul V. Mankowski

Readers of the *New York Times*, which Alasdair MacIntyre has called "that parish magazine of affluent and self-congratulatory liberal enlightenment," will have noticed the appearance on its op-ed pages of a relatively new genre of sermonizing. The burden of the preachers (who include, but are not limited to, Catholic theologians) may be called "defining the mainstream." The game is to sketch a spectrum of theological or political opinion in such a way that one can locate oneself in the center. The centrist (or "balanced" or "nuanced") position is assumed to be the equivalent of fairness and clear-sightedness, while proponents of more marginal ideas are portrayed as self-evident bigots. Not surprisingly, Cardinals O'Connor and Ratzinger are, in this scheme, pushed out to join the Pope on the rightist fringe of the Church, while the homilists commonly perch themselves and their colleagues squarely atop the *Medium Aureum* of sober objectivity.

This ploy is bogus on several grounds. First, out of any 1,000 people, 998 will be able to find positions more extreme than their own on both sides of any issue: it's a game nearly anyone can play. Second, we must surely judge that individual (after the fact) to have been most clear-sighted and objective who saw the *truth* of the matter at hand, not the one who was most nuanced in his deliberations. Neville Chamberlain was more "balanced" than Churchill regarding the Nazi threat, yet it is Churchill who was proved right. Athanasius would have fared poorly next to the suave and sensitive Arius at a cocktail party in a modern Faculty Club, yet Athanasius, not Arius, was judged to have spoken the mind of the Church. We need not be impressed, then, by the man who claims to find the Mainstream flowing between his own two legs.

To equate the true or the just with the consensus of the Academy is an error of such astonishing naiveté that it is incredible it should have survived Plato's *Gorgias*; yet those who work to perpetuate it are guilty of a still more profound imposture. E. F. Schumacher helped expose the fallacy by making a distinction between "convergent" and "divergent" problems. Convergent problems are those whose solutions tend to become more and more alike the more thoroughly they are investigated and the more clearly the terms of the problem are understood. Schumacher says that the solution to the problem of building a man-powered, two-wheeled means of transportation tends to "converge" on what we recognize as a bicycle. Some problems, such as those posed by detective novels or crossword puzzles, might be called "trivially convergent," since they have one and only one possible answer. Divergent problems, on the other hand, produce alternative solutions that grow more distinct and irreconcilable as more careful scrutiny and analysis are brought to bear on them. The justification for civil punishment provides such a problem, as does the controversy over the justice of abortion. To understand the terms of a divergent problem is precisely to understand that a "middle ground" is logically impossible.

The chief disservice of the Mainstream Guard is that it treats all controversies as if they were susceptible of convergent solutions. In this view the possibility of cold fusion and the morality of contraception are the same *kind* of problem, and, on such terms, we are obliged to be suspicious of any deviant position—that is, of a position at variance with those whom the most influential sector of the Academy regards as expert. For the only scheme in which it makes sense to invoke a "mainstream" position as desirable or meritorious in itself is that in which the relevant dispute concerns a convergent problem, wherein the centrist solution (provided the spectrum of opinion is well-defined) is likely to be the best one. Now it takes little reflection to see that most major problems of ecclesial and political controversy have always been and will continue to be divergent and not convergent ones; accordingly, there is an especially vexing irony in the fact that those who want to find a "mainstream" position on the Big Issues are almost always those who are committed on other grounds to a pluralist or relativist stance in matters of public debate.

This paradox merits some comment. It is nonsense to connect consensus with truth except, cautiously, in the case of a convergent problem dealt with by unanimously esteemed experts. But those who vaunt consensus from the pages of the *Times* insist they are pluralists, even on the issues respecting which they assign themselves to the center. How can this be? Only, I believe, if their pluralism is one of convenience rather than

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principle—that is, if it is a device of political expedience instead of a truly philosophical conviction. And there is, in fact, very little evidence that champions of ecclesial pluralism have bent over backwards to insure that their opponents are given a fair hearing on occasions of public debate, nor are they conspicuously tolerant or open-minded when they happen themselves to be in positions of extra-ecclesial authority—as journal editors, perhaps, or as deans of theology faculties.

Of course, the ruse is not a new one. As long as there has been an orthodoxy, there have been those who have claimed it for themselves on sociological rather than theological grounds. One thinks of Brilliant Arcturus in Ronald Knox's memorable lines:

> *Who cried, as joyfully he bound his sheaves,*
> *"What I believe is what the Church believes!"*
> *Tho' some might find it matter for research*
> *Whether the Church taught him, or he the Church.*

In a true democracy, a doctrine of pluralism may be a way of safeguarding the rights of minorities; in a hierarchy, however, where authority proceeds from a Will not constituted by any part of the population, "pluralism" is often a code word for the project of giving political power the ascendancy over legitimate authority. The vocabulary of the mainstream is simply a way of excommunicating the authorities by drawing a doxographical map in which all opinions are created equal and in which those of the Magisterium occupy an extreme marginal position.

Defining the Mainstream is ultimately a power game. There is no other explanation for it being played so earnestly on the editorial page of the *New York Times*—hardly a forum for measured theological discourse. It is, however, an arbiter of fashion, and of political fashion especially. Those for whom power and success are the only things that matter will count it vital to be among the Definers at whatever cost to earlier allegiances. Others will find themselves among the Defined, the exiled, those judged outside the mainstream, seated high above the waters of seamy Babylon, straining to hear the music of a distant Voice. Theirs, surely, is the better part.

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Middle East Apocalypse Now?

Peter J. Leithart

Saddam Hussein's invasion and annexation of Kuwait may have thrown the world economy into confusion, but it has revived one flagging and undeniably American industry: dispensationalist pop-apocalyptic.

Largely under the influence of former steamboat captain Hal Lindsey, a large sector of American Evangelicalism has for several decades simply taken it for granted that the great eschatological battle of Armageddon is just around the corner. Despite the disclaimers of responsible dispensationalist academics, the founding of the state of Israel in 1948 is believed by many American Christians to have been a fulfillment of biblical prophecy. Within a generation of the founding, Lindsey and others have predicted, Christ will "rapture" His people up into the sky and leave the rest of the world to endure seven years of tribulation. A biblical generation is, more or less, forty years, which means that Jesus is some two years overdue.

Popular dispensationalism has been justly discredited in recent years. Two years ago, one Edgar Whisenant published the boldly titled *88 Reasons Why the Rapture Is in 1988*. Either Whisenant was wrong, or he was left behind. When 1988 had come and gone, cynical observers predicted that Whisenant would publish a sequel, *89 Reasons Why the Rapture Is in 1989*. The additional reason, of course, would have been that the rapture did not occur in 1988.

Recent events in the Middle East, however, have revived dispensationalist fortunes. Things finally seem to be falling into place. At long last, after decades of impatient waiting, there is a *real* crisis in the Middle East, one that threatens to explode into a war of global dimensions. It is all enough to warm a dispensationalist heart.

Lindsey and his disciples arrive at their predictions through an imaginative, politicized interpretation of biblical prophecy, particularly of the book of Revelation. In Revelation 12, for example, a woman attacked by a dragon is given eagle's wings to fly to safety. Lindsey interprets this as a prophecy of the rescue of Jewish believers from the tribulations of Palestine. Lindsey goes on to argue, in a piece of exegesis that would make Origen blush, that since the eagle is the national symbol of the U.S., the passage might be describing a rescue undertaken by airplanes from the American Sixth Fleet. This is an example of the method of interpretation Lindsey defends as "literal." Indeed. And Origen was the father of grammatico-historical exegesis.

Lindsey's popularity and influence is disheartening testimony to the desperate lack of biblical and historical

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roots within much of the Evangelical world. So dominant has dispensationalist interpretation of biblical prophecy become that even many of those who oppose it accept the playing field that Lindsey has staked out. Lindsey's opponents have challenged his time line of the last days—all the while simply assuming, along with Lindsey, that the purpose of biblical prophecy is to satisfy curiosity about the end of the world.

In making this assumption, dispensationalism and its mirror-image opponents take at least two false steps. First, many on both sides tend to reduce the eschatological to the millennial. One of the great insights of New Testament studies over the past century or so has been the recognition that the New Testament's gospel is thoroughly eschatological. What Jesus announced and established was precisely the eschatological "age to come," the kingdom of God. His life, death, resurrection, and ascension were as much eschatological events as His second coming. The millennium, mentioned in a single text in a highly symbolic book, can hardly be called the most important facet of New Testament eschatology.

Second, dispensationalism and many of its Evangelical critics completely ignore the ecclesial and sacramental dimensions of the kingdom of God. One can read reams of dispensationalist writings, and reams of anti-dispensationalist writings as well, without the least suspicion that in the teaching of Jesus the kingdom of God is a *feast*. Dispensationalists appear to know nothing of the connection, as Geoffrey Wainwright has put it, between eucharist and eschatology, an emphasis pervasive in patristic thought and in much modern Orthodox, Catholic, and mainline Protestant theology. Oddly mimicking the old liberal view that Jesus came to establish the kingdom and ended up with a Church, dispensationalism reduces the Church to an afterthought, a parenthesis between the time of Israel past and the time of Israel future.

The error of dispensationalism, therefore, is not merely a matter of erroneous exegesis, though there is abundant error in exegesis. The error of dispensationalism is a category mistake. It is not merely that dispensationalists play a bad game, but that they are playing the *wrong* game. Dispensationalism (and many of its critics) treat prophecies of the kingdom of God as prophecies of a millennial "end time," when the New Testament would direct us to see biblical prophecy fulfilled in Christ, and the kingdom manifested primarily in His Body ecclesial and sacramental.

Until Evangelicals begin to recognize the centrality of these dimensions of the kingdom, we will continue to be treated to frenzied speculations as each new crisis unfolds. And until Evangelicals firmly reject Lindsey's brand of pop-apocalypticism, they cannot expect to be taken seriously on questions of national interest.

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"Linguistic Injustice": An Exchange

James F. White and James T. Burtchaell

THE UNIVERSITY OF NOTRE DAME

TO: My Colleagues in the Department of Theology
FROM: James F. White

On December 13, 1982, the Department made an important step in approving a motion calling upon us to avoid sex-exclusive and sex-discriminatory language. I write you because as time progresses, I find further injustices in words and phrases that we have long used in doing theology. I invite you to consider and discuss these examples of which I have become aware.

The terms "crippled," "disabled," or "handicapped" are unfortunate. I am told that the current preference is "physically challenged," which certainly sounds more positive.

I am astonished at how much we use physical terms in ethical talk. "Upright" is good and "fallen" is bad, but those are terms that make the physically fit morally normative. I think we need to be more sensitive. I am still terrified of stairs without railings, but this does not mean that I am a better or worse person because of fear of falling.

In theology we have a long history of using "blind" for those with whom we disagree. While in seminary, I read much of Calvin to a blind student, and I know how often I flinched at that term. "Dumb" and "deaf" are also used as derogatory terms when nothing physical is intended. It would seem to be best to avoid physical terms for describing intellectual perception.

The term "non-Catholic" is discriminatory, as are all negative terms. Blacks resent being called "non-white" or women being labeled "non-male." The alternative is to be specific: "other Christians," "other faiths," or "without religious identity." "Non-Catholic" is simply insulting.

The term "Catholic" itself is offensive to Anglican and Orthodox students when used in a sense that excludes them. However, the term "Roman" which some of our students and colleagues use seems equally problematic in emphasizing the particular and possibly the least attractive feature of Roman Catholicism. (Dick McBrien and Jim Burtchaell have done some interesting writing on this question.)

The use of the article is important in speaking of "the Church," "a Church," or "the churches." It is not correct to make such statements as "Newman left the

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Church in 1845" or "the Church is not a democracy." These statements may be true of one Church or another (although I find even the second example debatable) but not of the universal Church. The clear implication of misuse of the definite article with the singular is that other churches do not count. I do not think that is good Roman theology (though prevalent) today. Certainly, in a university setting, impartiality should be taken for granted.

I hope these suggestions will provoke some thought and lead you to share with me other examples of linguistic injustice which you have discovered.

TO: James F. White and other colleagues in Theology
FROM: James T. Burtchaell

The very last day of the term is a tired time, and I confess that when your memo on "linguistic injustice" came around, Jim, I read it and put it aside for filing. But your argument and examples stayed with me—they "provoked some thought," as you had hoped—and suggested some further views that I hope you will entertain.

I remember well that when our department was debating the resolution to forgo discriminatory language eight years ago, my misgivings arose from the absence of any accompanying norms. We were told at the time that the matter was intuitively clear, yet when it came to a vote there were no explicit principles or illustrations to define or describe what we thought we were adopting. Although I strive to use gender-inclusive language wherever possible and appropriate, and I ask the same (with explanation) from my students, your own extensions of the basic insight or sentiment are debatable enough, I believe, to summon up my misgivings of yesteryear.

Your first suggestion is that we discontinue the use of certain physical metaphors in moral discourse. "Crippled," "disabled," "handicapped," "blind," "dumb," "deaf," and other such terms, you believe, are derogatory because they "make the physically fit morally normative." This claim encounters serious problems. First of all, to be consistent, we would also have to forswear such terms as "clear-sighted," "articulate," and "vigorous." Mary could not receive the "power of the Spirit"; Deborah could no longer cry, "Give ear, you princes" (nor could she sing of the "warriors in Israel unbinding their hair," lest baldness carry moral reproach), and the report in Acts that "with these words, (Stephen) fell asleep" would need correction out of deference to those afflicted by either narcolepsy or insomnia.

But back to the negatives. . . . I was immediately reminded, by your examples, of the letter to the angel of the church in Laodicea (sorry about "the church"; cf. *infra*): "You say to yourself: I am rich, I have made a fortune and have everything I want, never realizing that you are wretchedly and pitiably poor, and blind and naked too."

I think that what you are asking is that we abandon all use of metaphor. But only people given to verbal naiveté, such as academics, are liable to misunderstand a healthy use of analogy to convey, or at least to suggest, the mysteries of our life in the spirit. How can we forgo all use of bodily metaphor to allude to the invigorating or the withering (sorry!) of the spirit?

We worship one who is, among his other identities, known as *Sôtêr*: healer. Health is surely one of the Bible's most pervasive metaphors for what is spiritually normative, precisely because we naturally think of health as normative for the body. And so it is.

I am not insensitive to our capacity for our using images in ways that unwittingly sting others. In the late 1960s a black undergraduate read his poem one evening at Mass in Dillon Hall; it was entitled "Nigger Night." He brought home to us how black was the metaphoric tag for evil: devil's food cake (cp. angel food cake), black hats vs. white hats, the dark side, blackening one's character, blackguard, blackhearted, blackball, blacklist, blackmail, Black Mass, black sheep, Black Plague. People who had just laid aside the term "Negro" for "black" were dismayed to find that so many of its associations were sinister (sorry). Yet as a Christian, I would be bewildered to be deprived of all the central imagery of darkness, that begins our Story by covering the watery deep, and light, that glorifies the heavenly Jerusalem at the End.

I also remember discovering during one Easter vigil the almost physical distress of some Eastern Rite Palestinians among us who as refugees driven from their homeland were affronted by our incessant imagery of the people of Israel despoiling the Egyptians, and seizing vines and trees they never planted and cisterns others had dug. I went home that night wondering how on earth they celebrate Easter in the Coptic Rite; I concluded that their liturgy must use the Exodus texts very sparingly indeed. But I did explain to my Palestinian friends that our spiritual ancestry was not to the State of Israel today (nor to any other state or race), but to a Lord who had revealed himself to our slowly growing understanding through reflection on those incidents of the past. And, on balance, I think I would rather explain to those whose health is handicapped or injured today how it is that we use metaphor, than try to eke out a bleak existence deprived of our inspired imagery.

In a word, I think most people (except, perhaps, us academics) will understand that our use of physical metaphors in moral discourse does not imply that physical health is morally normative. But if I understand you correctly you are going further: you are suggesting that we ought not consider or depict physical health as *physically* normative. This is astonishing. I have never known a blind person or a paraplegic or an alcoholic who was not very aware of impairment. Those who have

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benefited from the wonderful rehabilitation programs, who have physically surmounted or even transfigured their handicap—and who have often undergone moral transformation in the process—seem to me to be the most aware of having begun at a loss. I work regularly with some of these people, and have not encountered vocabulary-landscaping such as "physically challenged" in place of "disabled." In some official circles "developmentally disabled" is now prescribed in place of "retarded," but one wonders whether the improvement of sentiment is worth the loss of brevity; one thinks of "Persons with primary language other than English (PLOTEs)." These are circumlocutions that really take the long way around.

Your second instance of linguistic injustice is more familiar: "The term 'non-Catholic' is discriminatory, as are all negative terms." Jim, what of the nonaligned countries, the nonviolent, the noncombatants, the nonbelligerents, the Nonconformist, the Nonjurors, the nonsmokers, the noncommissioned officers, the nonobservant Jews, the nonprofit corporations, not to mention the Gentiles, the inorganic compounds, the nonferrous metals? And what of God Godself, whom we can literally depict only with negatives: unchangeable, interminable, immutable, noncomposed . . . ? Once again, are academics the only people whose use of language is so unsupple (sorry) that we cannot grasp the difference between negatives intended to describe or to differentiate and negatives meant to denigrate?

I admit that when I went to a soccer match between England and The Rest of the World I was uneasy at the chauvinism of the title, but then I remembered the World Boxing Champion selected by some folks in New York, and I took it more in stride (sorry). India is not defined as a nonaligned country, but it can for some purposes be categorized that way (and others as well). And in an institution or a community where there are Catholics, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Buddhists, Druzes, Methodists, Jews, Mennonites, Muslims (Sunni, Shiite, *et al.*), Hindus, Sikhs, and others, "non-Catholics" strikes me as the very efficient expression when one needs to refer to all but the Catholics.

I believe that you consider both "non-Catholics" (I prefer "Noncatholics") when referring to other Christians, and "Catholics" when referring to members of the Catholic Church, to be offensive. As for the latter, it is the name we give ourselves. It dates back to Ignatius of Antioch and I see no reason to apologize for our continuity of usage. It is not intended to imply disdain for any others, only to characterize us by our calling. By contrast, "Roman" as you use it is a term of disdain.

You object to any Christian using "the Church" or "the church" to denote his or her own communion, because it implies claims of authenticity or continuity that are impolite to those of other Christian allegiances, and because it is derogatory to the notion of a "universal church." I confess, Jim, that I sometimes use "the Great Church" to refer to all Christian groups taken together. The difficulty with that is that the Christian churches are not, in fact, together. We proclaim the gospel differently, we do not sup at the Lord's table together, and we descry different ways to walk.

The language you advocate is not neutral, as you seem to propose. I do not belong to my church indifferently. I belong in the belief that it continues as the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church, while it simultaneously continues as the fractious, sinful, disloyal, and deviant church. It is not the church to which you belong. We are not in communion with one another. I lament this and share some of the blame for it. But we are in different churches. I give no public account of your communion and allegiance; that is for you to do. It is entirely inappropriate for me to require you to defer in your self-referring public discourse to my sense of your church. But neither is it appropriate for you to demand that we Catholics describe ourselves in ways that suit your ecclesiology. Still less, in a Catholic university, should Catholics have to apologize for continuing to call themselves Catholics.

So, Jim, I thank you and commend you for having stirred up the issue, though I cannot agree with the particular injunctions you would lay upon our shared discourse. You have managed to disallow two of the most fundamental kinds of Christian theological discourse: the *via analogica* and the *via negativa*. I wish you had done so earlier in the term; it would have made a stimulating colloquium. But perhaps we can make it a stimulating colloquy anyway, by memoranda.

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Joshing Richard Rorty

Richard John Neuhaus

I

Voltaire took pleasure in publishing the last will and testament of his friend Jean Messelier: "I should like to see, and this will be the last and the most ardent of my desires, I should like to see the last king strangled with the guts of the last priest." The anti-religious passion of certain streams of the Enlightenment is well known. Indeed, it is so well known that, in many circles, the Enlightenment is equated with militant secularism. The legacy of that Enlightenment is still encountered in mental habits that, in a taken-for-granted manner, pit reason against faith, evidence against revelation, and enlightenment against superstition—and most mightily against religious superstition.

Where Enlightenment figures were not overtly hostile to religion their arguments frequently resulted in consigning religion to a ghetto of privatized subjectivity. In "What is Enlightenment?" Immanuel Kant made a sharp distinction between public and private reason. Public reason is the critical and analytical thing that scholars do for an enlightened public, while private reason reinforces what is necessary to sustain the religious and civil order. Only public reason qualifies as enlightenment, the pursuit of free inquiry independent from the institutions and traditions of authority. "Our age," Kant declared, "is, in especial degree, the age of criticism, and to criticism everything must submit."

The telling of our civilizational story in this Enlightenment vein is still today done in a manner that is best described as cavalier. Witness, for but one of innumerable instances, Peter Gay's study, *The Enlightenment: An Interpretation* (1967). The great thing about the Enlightenment, Gay says, was the dawning of reason that displaced the beliefs of "traditional religion," which had been dependent solely upon faith. "The great religions of antiquity," Gay writes, "all bear this character: they were not reasoned about; they did not require proof and hence could not be disproved."

As Robert Wilken has recently argued in the *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, such claims are disproved by even a cursory acquaintance with the religious traditions. (And, as we shall see, while the claims of these traditions cannot now be proved, they are, in the larger scheme of things, susceptible to being disproved.) Wilken notes that Judah ha-Nasi codified the Jewish laws in the Mishnah, the Amoraiim added their critical debates and recorded them in the Talmud, Rashi and Tosaphists joined the discussion, all of which was put in the margins of the text, which enables the contemporary student to take part in debates that have been going on for centuries. "Similarly, Augustine read Paul and Plotinus (who had read Plato), Peter Lombard organized and codified the views of Augustine and other early Christian thinkers, Thomas Aquinas read Lombard, Francisco de Suarez read Thomas, and in our day Etienne Gilson read Augustine, Lombard, Thomas, and Suarez."

"Religious scholarship," Wilken writes, "has never been simply a matter of copying texts, of parsing sentences, of analyzing and explaining words and phrases." He cites Peter Abelard who wrote, "For the first key to wisdom is called *interrogatio*, diligent and unceasing questioning. . . . By doubting we are led to inquiry; and from inquiry we perceive the truth." In the Middle Ages, Wilken notes, Jews, Christians, and Muslims were engaged in a three-cornered discussion or, better, a four-cornered discussion, since all were in conversation with Aristotle. It was a rigorously critical discussion, thoroughly rational, although not what we would today call rationalistic. The imperative of reason was well stated by Augustine: "No one believes anything unless one first thought it to be

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believable. . . . Everything which is believed should be believed after thought has preceded. . . . Not everyone who thinks believes, since many think in order not to believe; but everyone who believes thinks."

In the Enlightenment tradition, it is obvious that many have thought in order not to believe. But not all by any means. Indeed, there are so many variations moving under the banner of Enlightenment that it is necessary to talk about the Enlightenment traditions. Henry F. May, for instance, casts important light on the Enlightenment when he elaborates the ways in which Enlightenment thought was synthesized with Reformation Christianity in the American founding (*The Enlightenment in America*, 1976). More recently, Alasdair MacIntyre has lifted up the importance of the Scottish Enlightenment as a tradition of reason distinctly different from the rationalism associated with other streams of the Enlightenment, especially those most hostile to religion (*Whose Justice? Which Rationality?*, 1988). But, for all the variety, especially in the understanding of reason and religion, there was something that could be described as "the Enlightenment project." In a recent essay, MacIntyre tells the story this way:

> It was the shared belief of the protagonists of the Enlightenment, whether in its French, its Scottish, or its German versions, that one and the same set of standards of truth and rationality—indeed of right conduct and adequate aesthetic judgment—was not only available to all human beings qua rational persons, but [these standards] were such that no human being qua rational person could deny their authority. The central project of the Enlightenment was to formulate and to apply those standards.

II

The subsequent disintegration of confidence that there are such standards by which all rational beings are bound is what MacIntyre calls the collapse of the Enlightenment project. Our purpose here is to examine some of the turns taken as a result of that collapse. For such an examination, we have a rich resource in Richard Rorty's most recent book, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* (1989). Rorty, of the University of Virginia, is eminently worth engaging for his frequent lucidity, erudition, and stylistic elegance; in addition to which he is one of the most influential philosophers writing in the English-speaking world today.

Rorty has a similar understanding of what the Enlightenment project was about and, like MacIntyre, he thinks it came to an end quite some time ago. As to what must succeed that project, he comes to conclusions that could hardly be more unlike MacIntyre's, especially with respect to religion. Rorty describes himself as a "liberal ironist." Liberal ironists know that the Enlightenment project is dead, and what is most dead about it is the rationalist notion that there is reality "out there" that is intellectually apprehensible and that can provide certain knowledge about how the world is and what we ought to do about it. Liberal ironists know, Rorty writes, that there is no universally valid answer to moral questions such as, "Why not be cruel?" "Anybody who thinks that there are well-grounded theoretical answers to this sort of question . . . is still, in his heart, a theologian or a metaphysician. He believes in an order beyond time and change which both determines the point of human existence and establishes a hierarchy of responsibilities."

Not so with liberal ironists, who, Rorty recognizes, are in a distinct minority. "The ironist intellectuals who do not believe that there is such an order are far outnumbered . . . by people who believe that there *must* be one. Most nonintellectuals are still committed either to some form of religious faith or to some form of Enlightenment rationalism." In Rorty's view, Enlightenment rationalism is not so much the enemy of religion as another form of religion; both the religious and the rationalists are, as he says, theologians or metaphysicians at heart, and there is hardly a dime's worth of difference between them.

Rorty sums up the intellectual succession in our civilizational story to date by saying that "once upon a time" people felt the need to worship something beyond the visible world. "God," for example. Beginning in the seventeenth century, "we" tried to substitute a love of truth for a love of God, treating the world described by science as a quasi-divinity. That is the phase most commonly associated with the Enlightenment project. Then, beginning at the end of the eighteenth century, came Romanticism, in which "we" tried to substitute a love of ourselves for a love of scientific truth, a worship of our own deep spiritual or poetic nature, treated as one more quasi-divinity. Now, Rorty suggests, comes the time to really grow up. The liberal ironist wants "to get to the point where we no longer worship *anything*, where we treat *nothing* as a quasi-divinity, where we treat *everything*—our language, our conscience, our community—as a product of time and chance. To reach this point would be, in Freud's words, to 'treat chance as worthy of determining our fate.'"

Whether man is capable of worshiping nothing is very much open to doubt. Put differently, one may ask whether worshiping nothing is not, in fact, *worshiping* nothing. Or, yet again, the worship of nothing may in fact be the worship of the self and what the self does in the face of nothing. It seems quite possible that Rorty is more in what he thinks of as the Romantic mode than he suspects. In reading his present essay, one is reminded of the words of the Curé de Torcy in Bernanos' *Diary of a Country Priest* (1937). He is describing the intellectually aspiring

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young people in his first parish: "They were forever trying to discover what they really were, you could feel them overflowing with sheer self-appreciation." Yet Rorty would certainly object that he is not like those young people at all. With Nietzsche, he discards their "spirit of seriousness" about how the world really is and who they really are. He wants to fuse the aesthetic and the moral, to indulge what Schiller called "play," to encourage a deliberate "light-mindedness" about existence.

In an earlier essay, "The Priority of Democracy to Philosophy," Rorty urges us to surrender the notion that there are general ideas pertinent to a just polity. Asking about foundations, justifications, and moral rationales is just a bad habit that we should get over. And we can get over the habit simply by not asking those questions anymore. When others pose such questions, just say no. "To take this view is of a piece with dropping the idea that a single moral vocabulary and a single set of moral beliefs are appropriate for every human community everywhere, and to grant that historical developments may lead us to simply *drop* questions and the vocabulary in which those questions are posed."

It is true that we will still encounter troublesome people who will continue to ask those questions in public, failing to recognize that they are, at most, of interest in the private formation of the self. But our moral commitment to a liberal polity, Rorty says, does not require that we take seriously everything that, for moral reasons, is taken seriously by one's fellow citizens. "It may require just the opposite. It may require trying to josh them out of the habit of taking those topics so seriously. There may be serious reasons for so joshing them." And if such people refuse to be joshed out of their bad philosophical habits, if they disrupt the liberal polity with their questions that have no answers, well, we may just have to declare them crazy and then get on with the business of democracy in the absence of philosophical justifications.

Those who are joshed by Mr. Rorty might understandably be inclined to josh him back. They might, for instance, point out that he has not broken as cleanly as he thinks with the "way of the mind" associated with the Enlightenment project. In important respects, he seems to agree with the imperative expressed by Descartes: "I thought that it was necessary . . . to reject as absolutely false anything concerning which I was able to entertain the least doubt." Rorty would likely respond, however, that his purpose is not to accept or reject any statements about reality; his project is beyond concerns about truth and falsehood, at least as those words have any *public* meaning. Defending philosophical realism, Etienne Gilson contended in *Thomist Realism and the Critique of Knowledge* (1983) that the great choice in philosophy comes down to some very basic oppositions. "It is necessary to choose between Aristotle and St. Thomas (truth is the conformity of intelligence with what is) and Kant in his logic (truth is the accord of reason with itself). Shall we judge reality as a function of knowledge or knowledge as a function of reality? That is the whole question."

Rorty responds that making such a choice is necessary only for "metaphysicians or theologians." Yet he seems to disguise, perhaps even from himself, that he has made such a choice, although not necessarily between the alternatives as posed by Gilson. He has, for instance, made a choice against the suspicion that modern thought, with its radical turn to the knowing subject, was a fundamentally wrong turn. A thorough historicist, one who is committed to contingency without reserve, might entertain that suspicion, might even be persuaded of its truth. For all his declared skepticism, Rorty does not seem to be skeptical enough to question his location of himself on the continuum of modern thought subsequent to the turn alluded to by Gilson. I do not suggest that the philosophy of the last two hundred years is in fact the result of a fundamentally wrong turn, but a theory of contingency that is prepared to "go all the way" should be able to address the possibility.

Rorty's course of radical skepticism rejects all "correspondence theories" of truth, whether the "realist" correspondence of subject and object or the "mentalist" correspondence of intrinsically coherent thought. He claims we can say nothing about "reality," about what is "out there"—or at least nothing to which it is appropriate to attach terms such as "true" or "false" in intersubjective (public) discourse. One may be tempted to dismiss such claims as no more than a form of the nihilism familiar since Nietzsche, or, at a less elevated level, as yet another turn on sophomoric solipsism. In that case, one might say with Gilson that serious philosophy has enough problems of its own to resolve without "becoming lost in labyrinths that nobody need enter." But if, with MacIntyre, we understand the history of thought to be one of contesting traditions, it is necessary to know something of the tradition of which Rorty is part. Carefully trailing behind us a strong cord, so that we will be able to find our way back, it is worth entering Rorty's labyrinth to at least have a look around.

III

To the religious thinker who is not a professional philosopher, but who does share Rorty's devotion to liberal democracy, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* has a number of appeals. Rorty's "liberal ironist" seems to be a modest fellow who leaves a lot of intellectual space open for possibilities about which we cannot know for sure. He appears to be an easy-going person who does not take himself too seriously, who demonstrates a lively serendipity, and who is

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prepared to be infinitely tolerant of other people more or less like himself, which is to say other people at home in the genteel ambience of Mr. Jefferson's university in Virginia. That may make the liberal ironist sound like a rather parochial figure but, if so, it is a more pleasant parochialism than some of its alternatives. Rorty insists that he is a pragmatist in the tradition of John Dewey. Unlike Dewey, however, he does not preach "a common faith" necessary to sustaining liberal democracy. To the contrary, in a lighthearted and lightheaded way that he takes to be a virtue, he proposes that we get along without any faith at all and then "see how things go." That is, it must be admitted, a kind of pragmatism.

Rorty argues that we all carry about a set of words that we use to justify the things that matter most to us. They are the words that we use to tell the story of our lives, and Rorty calls them a person's "final vocabulary." They are final in the sense that they are the best we can manage at the moment; we can't go beyond them without falling into helpless passivity or resorting to force. The ironist with the irony he commends satisfies three criteria:

> (1) She has radical and continuing doubts about the final vocabulary she currently uses, because she has been impressed by other vocabularies, vocabularies taken as final by people or books she has encountered; (2) she realizes that argument phrased in her present vocabulary can neither underwrite nor dissolve these doubts; (3) insofar as she philosophizes about her situation, she does not think that her vocabulary is closer to reality than others, that it is in touch with a power not herself. Ironists who are inclined to philosophize see the choice between vocabularies as made neither within a neutral and universal metavocabulary nor by an attempt to fight one's way past appearances to the real, but simply by playing the new off against the old.

These three characteristics of ironism are critical to Rorty's case. The first two, however, are hardly distinctive to the position he would advance. Indeed, radical and continuing doubt about one's own "social construction of reality" (to use the language of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann) because of interaction with other such constructions can well be accommodated within many conceptual schemes, including religious traditions—although in such traditions, radical and continuing doubt is not necessarily considered a virtue, except in the sense earlier indicated by Abelard. Similarly, in such traditions it is readily agreed that such doubts cannot be definitively dissolved under existing circumstances, including the circumstance of our current "final vocabulary."

This situation is usually described in religious terms as walking by faith and not by sight. If faith is understood as trust rather than as a way of knowing, and if sight means the dissolution of all possible doubt, it would seem that Rorty's ironist equally walks by faith and not by sight. His third criterion is more distinctive by virtue of its (metaphysical?) assumption that one is not in touch with a power that is not oneself, and by its grounding in a dialectic between old and new. At the same time, the third criterion also loses its distinctiveness *if* the ironist realizes that her vocabulary has no greater hold on reality, etc. *in any philosophically provable sense.* With that amendment (and there would seem to be no reason Rorty should disallow the amendment), the post-Enlightenment Christian can satisfy all three criteria for being an ironist.

Rorty says that he intends to be an historicist "all the way down." It is in the utter contingency and arbitrariness of language that whatever truth there is is *made* by us. In his Nietzschean history of culture, and in the philosophy of language he embraces, we "see language as we now see evolution, as new forms of life constantly killing off old forms—not to accomplish a higher purpose, but blindly." Language is not a "mirror of nature," it is not a medium between ourselves and reality—whether reality "out there" or reality "deep within ourselves." There are no ahistorical, permanent, highest-level realities that adjudicate lower-level conflicts. The traditional question is, "How do you know that?" But, says Rorty, about the most important things we can only ask, "Why do you talk that way?"

If we are ironists, says Rorty, we talk as we do so that we, with Nietzsche, will be able to say of our lives, "Thus I willed it!" The traditional use of language is to "express something that was already there," whereas it is our attempt to use language so as "to make something that never had been dreamed of before." The great fear is the fear of not being novel. We fear that our life's project will be lost or forgotten, but we fear much more that, even if our works are remembered, "nobody will find anything distinctive in them." The tragedy is that "one will not have impressed one's mark on the language but, rather, will have spent one's life shoving about already coined pieces." Our final language, if we succeed, proves our liberation from our inherited language—"then one would have *demonstrated* that one was not a copy or a replica." Herein lies the superiority of the "strong poet" to the philosopher, extending the reference to "poet" beyond those who write verse. Proust, Newton, Darwin, Hegel, Heidegger, Derrida, and others are strong poets who rebelled against death, death being the failure to be novel. The fear of the strong poets "is the fear that one might end one's days in . . . a world one never made, an inherited world."

The inherited philosophical world with which Rorty associates himself began, he suggests, with Hegel. "Instead of constructing philosophical theories

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and arguing for them," Rorty writes, "he avoided argument by constantly shifting vocabularies, thereby changing the subject." The critical contribution of Hegel is this: "In practice, though not in theory, he dropped the idea of getting at the truth in favor of the idea of making things new." (One may well wonder what Hegel would make of such a claim, but our purpose here is to discuss not Hegel but Rorty.) We are told that the "young Hegel" broke out of the philosophical sequence that runs from Plato through Kant "and began a tradition of ironist philosophy which is continued in Nietzsche, Heidegger, and Derrida." The distinctive thing about these philosophers is that "they define their achievement by their relation to their predecessors rather than by their relation to the truth."

It is nonsense, we are given to understand, to ask about the truth of this theory of ironism. "The last thing the ironist theorist wants or needs," says Rorty, "is a theory of ironism." Indeed, the implication is that he cannot abide such a theory because such theories inevitably make the ironist vulnerable to the traditional questions about truth. "Ironist theory," Rorty writes, "is thus a ladder which is to be thrown away as soon as one has figured out what it was that drove one's predecessors to theorize." If the ironist is to be able to say, "Thus I willed it," he has to be able to sum up his life "in his own terms." "He is trying to get out from under inherited contingencies and make his own contingencies, get out from under an old final vocabulary and fashion one which will be all his own." He refuses to be judged by "history" or even by the standards that he has created. Rather, says Rorty, "the judge the ironist has in mind is himself."

As "strong poetry" succeeds philosophy, so literary criticism, broadly understood, is the most potent form of strong poetry. The ironist, of course, learns from, interacts with, the canon of inherited vocabularies. But that too is a ladder to be kicked away. "What [the ironist] is looking for is a redescription of that canon which will cause it to lose the power it has over him—to break the spell cast by reading the books which make up that canon." It seems that even the memory of how he came to his final vocabulary is intolerable. Rorty cites Heidegger's observation that "a regard to metaphysics still prevails even in the intention to overcome metaphysics. Therefore our task is to cease all overcoming, and leave metaphysics to itself." Heidegger feared that someone would one day do what in fact Derrida has done, to treat him as he treated Nietzsche, "as one more (the last) rung in a ladder which must be cast away."

Although Rorty does not quite put it this way, the drive to self-creation by the achievement of utter novelty, the urge to be one's own judge, the struggle for liberation from inherited vocabularies, all of this is closely associated with sterility and death. In the case of Derrida, of course, the additional connection is made between sterility and homosexuality. Children entangle us with others, compromising our singularity. They are hostages to the future, thereby binding us to a future from which we would be free, and they are potential judges, thereby compromising our judgment of ourselves on our own terms. Rorty quotes Derrida's correspondence with one whom he calls his "sweet love." Derrida writes that "what has betrayed us is that you wanted generality, which is what I call a child."

Children are like universal public truths or privileged descriptions that "metaphysicians" hope to hand on to posterity in the hope of fending off death and finitude. Derrida says children are just the opposite, however; they tend to patricide and matricide. As the ladders of the past must be kicked away, so also with the ladders from ourselves to the future, for they compromise the uniqueness of the life that would say of itself, "Thus I willed it!" Derrida writes to his friend, "At least help me so that death comes to us only from us. Do not give in to generality."

IV

These, then, are some of the things to be seen in Rorty's labyrinth of Enlightenment irony. It is an intriguing place, rich in intellectual displays and learned excursuses, frequently concerned, I expect the author would agree, more with being playful than with being plausible. Although he would no doubt quickly add that what most people call "plausible" bears the baggage of inherited vocabularies fatally premised on the notion that language is somehow the medium of "mirroring" how things really are. But now it is time to take the cord we had trailed behind us and find our way out of the labyrinth, where we might better consider what we have seen and why it so appeals to many intelligent people of our time.

It has been observed that "realism" is more a boast than a school of thought, but Rorty and those of an opposing view, such as Gilson, know that is not right. Realism, or what Rorty disparagingly calls "commonsense," assumes that, yes, language is in some important sense a medium between subject and object, between the mind and what is "out there" or abidingly deep down within us, even if such a correspondence is not provable beyond possible doubt. Such correspondence is arguably a "justifiable belief," if not provably "true," a distinction that Rorty completely ignores. Justifiable beliefs need not rest on other and more certain beliefs such as those supported by the sense data demanded by the Enlightenment empiricist or the deliverances of reason asserted by the rationalist.

Realism rejects the radical "turn to the subject" that Rorty associates with the Kantian stage of the Enlightenment, as it rejects Rorty's putative overcoming of the subject/object distinction. Such realism is inescapably "foundationalist," at least in the sense that

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it operates with some version of a connection between inward and outward reality. Realists of the world unite behind Dr. Johnson's (non-foundational!) refutation of Bishop Berkeley's presumably irrefutable theory about the nonexistence of matter when the good doctor kicked a large stone and declared, "I refute it *thus*." For those who are satisfied with that refutation, there is perhaps no reason to bother with Richard Rorty at all, except, as one might have occasion, to try to josh him out of his views or, as he repeatedly recommends in dealing with the "metaphysicians," to try to change the subject.

But, given the current intellectual climate, attention must be paid, and attending to Richard Rorty can be good, clean cerebral exercise. For those with a taste for pointing out contradictions and inconsistencies, Rorty also offers rich fare. But they should be forewarned that Rorty has anticipated their attacks on "self-referential inconsistency" by disclaiming any interest in what he dismisses as the logics of consistency, which are inescapably "theological or metaphysical." Being much closer to the second, romantic stage of the Enlightenment than he seems to think, Rorty, in effect, says with Whitman, "Do I contradict myself? Very well then I contradict myself (I am large, I contain multitudes)." The varieties in the contingent multitudes, from Plato to Derrida, that have contributed to Rorty's final vocabulary need not be reconciled, for the ladder has been kicked away and we have only to do with the refinement of contingencies that is Richard Rorty, that is this self itself. Charges of inconsistency or moral relativism do not apply to the ironist who does not acknowledge the referents by which inconsistency or relativism might be determined.

The end product is in some respects quite attractive. Rorty and his fellow liberal ironists have many sensible views about "a self-identity which suits one for citizenship in an ideally liberal state." Liberal ironists "combine commitment with a sense of the contingency of their own commitment." The reasons for their commitment to liberal democracy are unexceptionable (dare one say commonsensical?), appealing in a self-interested way to its advantages over alternative arrangements. Against political ideologues on the left and the right, they have a keen sense of the importance of the distinction between private and public, insisting upon a large space for the former and a small space for the latter.

Rorty has no use for salvational politics of any sort. Salvation, if it is to be found, is to be found apart from the public arena, in the private sphere of fantasy and experiment, aimed at self-creation. He criticizes ironists who are not liberal (e.g., Michel Foucault) as he criticizes liberals who are not ironists (e.g., Jürgen Habermas). Although he acknowledges that it is small now, he wants to multiply the tribe of those who share his preference for a liberal democracy in which ironic existence is protected from liberal metaphysicians and liberalism is protected from ironic nihilists.

It must be admitted, however, that the satisfactions in attending to Richard Rorty are reduced by the frequent dogmatism and apodicticism with which he asserts "truths" that are neither argued for nor accommodated by what appears to be his theory of truth. For all his radical skepticism, Rorty appears to "know" an astonishing number of truths—public truths, the kinds of things that his despised "metaphysicians" call facts. On many questions it seems that science does "discover" truths about things "out there," and is not simply engaged in language games and interesting paradigm shifts. For instance, Rorty knows that the contributions of such as Aristotle, Saint Paul, Newton, and Bach were the absolutely contingent "results of cosmic rays scrambling the fine structure of some crucial neurons in their respective brains," or obsessional kinks left in these brains by childhood traumata. Such assertions would seem to be linguistic representations of reality, the very use of language that Rorty says he rejects.

The force of his saying that language is a tool for dealing with the world rather than a representation of the world is considerably reduced by his implicit acknowledgment that the tool only works if it has some implicit connection with the way the world is. But he refuses to acknowledge that explicitly because to do so is to open the door to the "metaphysicians or theologians" who believe that philosophy and science have "a priestly function" in mediating "fact" or "objectivity" and thus "putting us in touch with a realm which transcends the human."

Yet Rorty knows so many things that, despite himself, are stated as fact and from which he "logically" (usually a derogatory term in his vocabulary) draws conclusions. He knows what people do and do not fear, he knows that Freud has given us a way to understand human behavior that is more adequate than earlier descriptions, he knows the course of history is toward maximizing freedom, and he claims to know that, if we attend to freedom, goodness and truth will take care of themselves. He even knows that "scientific discoveries" have discredited belief in an immortal soul. The ironist's final vocabulary turns out to be not so formal as it appears; it is filled with contents that other people call facts, and about which, contra the first article of his ironist's creed, Rorty gives no indication of having "radical and continuing doubts."

Rorty writes, "The difference between a search for foundations and an attempt at redescription is emblematic of the difference between the culture of liberalism and older forms of cultural life. For in its ideal form, the culture of liberalism would be one which was enlightened, secular, through and through." That is the ironist's taken-for-granted

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"construction of reality." Rorty is at points prepared to justify that construction by the declaration, "Thus I willed it," but at the same time he argues for it by producing evidence from a presumably nonexistent basis in fact. No doubt Rorty, having declared his immunity to the charge of self-referential inconsistency, would take umbrage at that criticism.

Rorty's argument might be somewhat more persuasive if he did not rely so heavily upon caricatures of opposing views. Like Peter Gay claiming that the Enlightenment replaced religion with reason, Rorty depicts pre-ironist Enlightenment figures as people in need of assured certitudes, smugly satisfied that they could logically solve all problems, deluded in their addiction to general theories for explaining reality, and so forth. With respect to the religious versions of this smugness, Rorty seems to be innocent of any acquaintance with religion that is not foundationalist in the sense that he caricatures, and is therefore not subject to the criticism he directs at Enlightenment rationalism. Most dismissively treated is what he assumes is the necessary connection between religion and mindless certitude.

In thinking about the prospects for the human future, ironists have little patience with "the scenario which their grandparents wrote around the turn of the century." One is mindful that one of Rorty's grandparents is Walter Rauschenbusch, the first among the apostles of the Social Gospel movement around the turn of the century. Rorty rejects that movement's putative religious certitudes, but he too declares himself a utopian and at critical points evidences an equally optimistic view of what others call human nature. Rorty's is a peculiar understanding of religion, apparently inherited from the era of liberal rationalistic Protestantism. He assumes religion is incompatible with "commitment to contingent commitment." The religion he has in mind, unlike postliberal Christianity, has everything to do with certitude, and little or nothing to do with faith and hope.

He apparently does not understand that even Luther's "Here I stand" qualifies as contingent commitment in that he declares himself prepared to recant if convinced by Scripture or clear reason. The difference between Luther's commitment and that of Rorty's ironist is not a difference of certitude but the difference between "Thus I willed it" and "So it is willed." There is in Rorty what might be described as an egotistic eschatology, and his caricature of religion prevents him from entertaining an alternative eschatology. He says that we can only understand history, including philosophy, in retrospect, from the end toward which it is developing. He says that those who achieved earlier redescriptions could not know what they were doing, "But *we* now know these things, for we latecomers can tell the kind of story of progress which those who are actually making progress cannot. . . . The product is *us*—our conscience, our culture, our form of life."

But compared with, say, the coming of the Kingdom of God, Rorty's is a safely foreshortened End Time. In Rorty's eschatology, it seems that our time is the End Time because it is our time. In his way of talking, the uncertainty of radical contingency is blunted by the security that we, here and now, know what history has been about. The radical mode of contingent existence that Rorty prizes would seem to be much heightened by a Christian eschatology that, unlike Rorty's, is falsifiable (after all, it is conceivable that Jesus will *not* return in glory). Here and elsewhere, Rorty's caricatured dismissals of alternative descriptions of reality are useful only in sustaining his belief in the singularity of the description and consequent mode of existence that he favors. Or, more precisely, the description and mode of existence that he believes he *is*.

V

His disdain for the metaphysicians of fact notwithstanding, Rorty persistently appeals, as we have seen, to what most would call facts in order to buttress his argument. This is the more troubling when he gets his facts quite thoroughly wrong. A few examples will serve. "The French Revolution," he writes, "had shown that the whole vocabulary of social relations, and the whole spectrum of social institutions, could be replaced almost overnight." At another point he argues at some length that the last two hundred years have demonstrated the ability to maintain humane society without reference to religion or belief in accountability to some self-transcending law. Or consider his claim that altruistic behavior—for example those gentiles who rescued Jews under Nazism—is occasioned by feelings of "solidarity" with those who share our social situation, rather than by obedience to rules dependent upon general theories. These are but three instances of Rorty's claiming to know what his theory says cannot be known, and in all three instances what he claims to know is, not to put too fine a point on it, simply wrong.

Simon Schama is among historians of the period who have shown that the French Revolution demonstrated precisely the opposite of what Rorty claims, namely, the perdurance of human behaviors and beliefs that can only be defied with awesomely bloody consequences. The effort to replace them "overnight" was a disastrous failure. As for Rorty's assumed secularization, American democracy at least has been accompanied by a continuing, and probably increasing, sense of dependence upon general moral rules, typically grounded in religious belief. (The argument has been made persuasively that other Western democracies are equally, if more parasitically, dependent upon such rules and beliefs.) Moreover, the massive study by Samuel and Pearl Oliner (*The Altruistic*

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Personality, 1988) of the rescuers during the Nazi era demonstrates, contra Rorty, that the overwhelming majority of them, in explaining their actions, employ the final vocabularies of particular communal traditions bearing universal laws and usually expressed in religious terms. Among the hundreds of rescuers studied, there would seem to be none who might qualify as a "liberal ironist." Here, as elsewhere, the conclusion is reinforced that the kind of society that Rorty desires can be neither generated nor sustained on the basis of the philosophy that he espouses.

One cannot help but be impressed by how, in these and other instances, Rorty is so thoroughly mistaken in describing the world of which he is part. But the question might be asked whether it makes much difference to his argument. One answer is that he certainly seems to think it makes a difference, or else he would not have gone to the trouble of marshalling so much (contrary-to-fact) evidence in order to buttress his case. At the very least, his errors undermine the complacence with which he recommends his thoroughly secular ironic liberalism. The outlook for a society based on ironic liberalism might then seem to be very grim indeed.

Admittedly, a societal need for belief in general moral foundations does not mean that such foundations actually exist. But without such belief the prospects for a humane social order would seem to be depressingly dim. (Elsewhere Rorty comes close to acknowledging as much, indicating that his community of ironic liberals may always be an enlightened minority dependent upon the "metaphysicians and theologians" whose influence holds the society together. If this is what he really believes, it may be that his complacent proposal for a society based on liberal ironism is but another instance of the "playful" Mr. Rorty not being entirely serious. Or perhaps he is simply reluctant to say right out that his ironism is parasitical, dependent upon other people who sustain society with beliefs, and a readiness to act on beliefs, that the ironist does not share.)

The relentless focus on self-creation in *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*, Rorty well knows, could be turned to purposes destructive of the democratic solidarity that he affirms. The right way to read his "jargon," he says, is "to think of philosophy as *in the service* of democratic politics." This, as we have seen, requires the sharpest possible distinction between public and private, and a determination to restrict the sphere of the former and expand the sphere of the latter. In the public sphere there is only one rule that he insists upon: We must not be cruel. But this does not produce an argument, in the sense of foundational reasons, for liberal democracy.

"The ironist takes the words which are fundamental to metaphysics, and in particular to the public rhetoric of the liberal democracies, as just another text, just another set of little human things." The person engaged in the literary critical life will in his "deconstructing" or "recontextualizing" of texts (Rorty suggests the two are much the same thing) come to "a heightened awareness of the possibility of suffering," but it "will not produce a *reason to care* about suffering." The liberal ironist is not cruel for the simplest of all utilitarian reasons: his hope that other people, in turn, will not be cruel to him. Rorty writes that "human solidarity is not a matter of sharing a common truth or a common goal but of sharing a common selfish hope, the hope that one's world—the little things around which one has woven one's final vocabulary—will not be destroyed."

Although it would seem to be incompatible with his ironist theory, Rorty does speak at times about common public purposes by which people are united. At other points, he contends that the vocabulary of giving justifying reasons "was essential to the beginnings of liberal democracy," but such a vocabulary has now "become an impediment to the preservation and progress of democratic societies." "I have been urging," he writes, "that the democracies are now in a position to throw away some of the ladders used in their own construction." Yet at another place he writes, "I cannot go on to claim that there could or ought to be a culture whose public rhetoric is ironist."

It is not entirely easy to understand Rorty at this point. He seems to reject the assumption that intellectuals will be ironists while the masses will always require justifying reasons to behave. Implying that the attitudes of intellectuals can be popularized, he notes that "once upon a time atheism, too, was the exclusive property of intellectuals." (Remember that he seems to think that the liberal democracy of his experience is, for all practical purposes, pervasively atheistic.) However, he then goes on to say, "In the ideal liberal society, the intellectuals would still be ironists, although the nonintellectuals would not." If we did not know that the idea of consistency has been banished, we might think Rorty is glaringly inconsistent at this point.

Abstractions such as "child of God" or "humanity" or "rational being" and "truth for its own sake" are still in the public vocabulary, and Rorty admits that they may have done some good in the past. The problem arises when we think that these "handy bits of rhetoric" are fit subjects for "conceptual analysis." We then discover that they are no more than fuzzy and inspiring *foci imaginarii*, although, he seems to suggest, they may be "useful lies" (Nietzsche) in a culture where most people have not arrived at liberal ironism. So it would seem that, in any society Rorty can imagine or desire, public rhetoric would not be ironist, that irony is a parasite on non-irony. This, despite some statements suggesting otherwise, would seem to be Rorty's final position, at least for the moment.

Then there is a sentence in passing that, when one

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considers its ramifications, would appear to deserve more than a sentence in passing. "I cannot imagine a culture," he writes, "which socialized its youth in such a way as to make them continually dubious about their own process of socialization." One wonders at what point parents and teachers would tell children that what they told them is true is not true in the sense that they intended them to understand that it is true. Upon reflection, no good age for doing that readily suggests itself. One wonders, too, what psychological (dare one say spiritual?) consequences this would have on the relationship between parents and children. One wonders, finally, if Mr. Rorty is serious about this. Of course, he might be serious if, as he sometimes suggests, the ironist (e.g., Derrida) is indifferent or even hostile to the idea of a successor generation. That would seem to follow from an eschatology that has no horizon beyond the self.

Rorty says that irony is a purely private matter, and yet by an ironist philosophy he would serve the unmistakably public cause of liberal democracy. Thus he implicitly acknowledges that those things we care deeply about have a public and societal dimension. Presumably he has in his own life more intimate relationships, which are also social, about which he does not nurture "radical and continuing doubts." Perhaps not. On his view, nothing approximating unconditional love is possible. Nothing is loved for itself except the self; there is no good beyond the self, never mind a *summum bonum*; all is instrumental to self-creation. A self that has only instrumental relations to other selves would seem, however, to be a pitiably shriveled self.

If the purpose of *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* is to argue, on the basis of Rorty's epistemology, a humanistic case for being concerned about others, the exercise must be judged a failure. There is no doubt about Rorty's desire to preserve and strengthen a humane social order. In a subsequently published essay, "Solidarity or Objectivity," he contends that "Rawlsian searchers for consensus, the heirs of Socrates, the people who wish to link their days dialectically each to each," must learn to value "some" of the institutions of liberalism, while refusing to accept the philosophical premises of those institutions. But that is an expression of wistful hope that some useful institutions and practices might be rescued from the philosophical rubble. It is at most an exhortation; it is certainly not an argument.

Further, while he seems to know that even the "self" is itself socially constructed, Rorty's project of self-creation is aimed at denying or overcoming what he knows. Put differently, the project is one of overcoming the self, including what has gone into the making of the self, which leaves, precisely, nothing. And that returns us to the question at the start as to whether, when one's ultimate concern is nothing—when one worships nothing—then one *worships* nothing. Since even the most original self is but the more-or-less novel reconfiguration of inherited vocabularies, the overcoming of that self must finally mean the destruction of that self.

Thus the suspicion is strengthened that Derrida's embrace of sterility and death is not an aberration but the logical end of the ironist project. To accept that, and to be ready to let go of the ironist project itself, is perhaps the perfect illustration of acting upon Freud's counsel "to treat chance as worthy of determining our fate." Of course the ironist who follows the project through to that end is ever aware of the (ironic) truth that that is the chance he has *chosen*, and therefore it may not be chance, in the usual sense of the term, at all.

In other words, Rorty's reversion to "fate," as a neutral metavocabulary by which to view possible vocabularies, begs the question. He has made a choice; and the choice between what he describes as "fighting one's way past appearances to the real," on the one hand, or "playing the new off against the old," on the other, is not philosophically decidable. His choice for the dialectic between new and old follows from prior choices. For example, he compares that dialectic to evolution, which is the new killing off the old, and doing so "blindly." But to exclude higher purpose from evolution is to choose the assumption of atheism. The question to Mr. Rorty is, "Why do you *choose* to talk the way you do?" It is not a lack of conversational geniality but his theory that prevents him from answering.

Then there are more practical considerations (if anything can be more practical than the quest for alternatives to sterility and death). Rorty worries that some ironists, like Nietzsche and Heidegger, are no friends of liberalism or democracy. What is one to do with such people? His answer: "One can ask these men to *privatize* their projects, their attempts at sublimity—to view them as irrelevant to politics and therefore compatible with the sense of human solidarity which the development of democratic institutions has facilitated. This request for privatization amounts to the request that they resolve an impending dilemma by subordinating sublimity to the desire to avoid cruelty and pain. In my view, there is nothing to back up such a request, nor need there be."

There is no indication that Rorty is not entirely serious about this. He leaves no doubt that he knows the kinds of politics that are heir to such as Nietzsche and Heidegger. Confronted by Stalin who plans to do some nasty things to the kulaks, or Hitler who has similar designs on the Jews, Rorty would request that they privatize their projects in order to avoid cruelty and pain. Or, as he puts it elsewhere, he would try to josh them out of their crazy ideas. Failing that, he would play his trump and "change the subject." We might well wish him luck. One is inclined to hope that, confronted by history's more aggressive nonliberal ironists, our request that they cease and desist

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will be backed up by good reasons, and a readiness to act on those reasons.

"You may well hope for such good reasons," Rorty might reply, "but the fact is that there are none." That is, so to speak, his bottom line. And that too, despite his denial, is his "self-referential contradiction," for, like Nietzsche and Derrida and a host of others, he claims to know what he claims cannot be known.

Although Rorty's public reasoning against the possibility of public reason is not persuasive, there are, as I have indicated, attractive elements in his thought, notably his modest view of politics and the understanding of the dangers of politicizing the spheres in which final felicities are to be sought. But, his intentions to the contrary, *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity* makes it quite clear that the liberal distinction between public and private cannot be protected on ironist grounds. If there is no alternative to his version of ironism, it would indeed seem that the jig is up for liberal culture.

VI

I will only briefly sketch the argument here, but I believe there are alternative and more attractive final vocabularies for people who are, in Rorty's phrase, "historicists all the way down." We do not need to settle for "simply playing off the new against the old." To settle for that is, finally, no more than an arbitrary choice. To be sure, if one makes that choice, the imperative may then be to "make" the only truth there is by developing a final vocabulary that "dissolves the inherited" and precludes the perceived terror of "getting stuck in one's native language." But, instead of pursuing self-creation by playing the new against the old, one may be persuaded that the best thing to do, even the fullest realization of the self, is identification with existing final vocabularies—vocabularies "talked," but also lived out in individual lives and communities.

Recognizing the contingency of all vocabularies, one may find in an existing vocabulary such compelling intimations of the good, the beautiful, and, yes, the true that one has no higher desire than to be part of the continuation of that final vocabulary. We may all well live in the house of words, but some houses have words that claim to tell us what really is "out there" and "deep down within," and we have no way of knowing—not with undoubtable certitude, not yet—whether those words are true. Neither does anyone know whether they are false. And, one adds, neither does anyone, including Mr. Rorty, know beyond the possibility of doubt whether speaking of truth and falsehood in this way does or does not have any bearing on how the universe really is. For many of us, Christianity is such a final vocabulary.

The orthodox Christian and, I expect, the believing Jew can readily accommodate the possibility of contingency "all the way down," that everything "just happened," including the notion that everything just happened. But he is persuaded—he cannot prove but is persuaded by compelling reasons—that in what Rorty calls the historical "upshot" it *will be* proved that everything did not just happen. Of course, the Christian's upshot, unlike Rorty's, does not have to do with an eschatology that terminates in the self. From his caricatures of religion in general and of Christianity in particular, as well as from the literature and arguments he cites as being pertinent to the questions he is addressing, it is evident that Mr. Rorty has not seriously (nor even "playfully," in the serious sense in which he uses that term) considered the merits of such religion as a final vocabulary.

Aside from the not unpleasant duty of joshing Mr. Rorty, spending some time with the "way he talks" helpfully illumines the continuity in a certain Enlightenment tradition. As noted earlier, Rorty believes the ironist project is a third stage of the Enlightenment, succeeding rationalism and romanticism. But the continuities are also striking. They are evident in the attitudes toward religion, tradition, and authority ("inherited vocabularies"). They are evident in that Rorty's ironist, as much as Descartes or Hume, begins from an individualistic premise of radical and systematic skepticism. And, of course, what he calls the romanticist stage of the Enlightenment is constitutive of his own project of self-creation.

The autonomous hero of uncompromised novelty (or at least as uncompromised as possible, given our entanglement in inherited vocabularies) declares himself to *be* in the face of death and the extinction of meaning. With Nietzsche, Rorty's ironists declare: "We would seek consolation, at the moment of death, not in having transcended the animal condition but in being that peculiar sort of dying animal who, by describing himself in his own terms, had created himself." "Thus I willed it!" That is not the entirety of romanticism, but that is undoubtedly romanticism.

At the beginning of his project, Rorty says that he cannot, in principle, prove the truth of his vocabulary, and he is not going to offer arguments against vocabularies that he wants to replace. "Instead, I am going to try to make the vocabulary I favor look attractive by showing how it may be used to describe a variety of topics." In other words, he wants to persuade us that his ironist way of talking is a better way of understanding our being-in-the-world. But he eschews all referents by which "better" or "worse" might be determined, except the desire to continue liberal democracy. Thus his project results in "philosophy as in the service of democratic politics." Being in the service of such politics, his theory provides no measures by which such politics can be either criticized or affirmed. Of his politics, as of his self, Rorty is saying, in effect, "This is the way it is. Take it or leave it." Of course he hopes we will take it, but his theory prevents him from giving any reasons why we

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should. (Although, as we have seen and contra his theory, he does in fact attempt to give such reasons—for accepting his politics, if not his self.)

The reader, then, is left free to choose whether, for private purposes, he wants to talk the way Richard Rorty talks. It is a way that is, in the words of the Curé de Torcy, "overflowing with sheer self-appreciation," and for that reason, among others, aesthetically unattractive. As Rorty rightly reminds us, there is a closer connection than is usually thought between the aesthetic and the moral. Rorty has told us why he talks that way in the only way that his theory allows him to tell us, namely, autobiographically. Finally, his only subject is himself, as he would persuade us that our only subject is our selves. He hopes that we will find his talk about himself engaging. It does seem to come down to being a matter of taste. As Rorty in principle cannot remind us, but other vocabularies do remind us, there are also connections between the aesthetic, the moral, and the true. All three should undoubtedly enter into one's response to Rorty's effort to so severely limit the subject matter for authentic conversation.

In addition, and despite his subordination of the public to the private, Rorty's final justification for his way of talking is thoroughly public in nature—because it is the best way to sustain the liberal democracy that he, along with most of us, favors. We have had occasion to point out some of the ways in which Rorty's ironist vocabulary fails in precisely that task, for it can neither provide a public language for the citizens of such a democracy, nor contend intellectually against the enemies of democracy, nor transmit the reasons for democracy to the next generation. Rorty's public justification of ironic liberalism thus fails on its own stated terms.

So now we have followed Mr. Rorty's advice and asked him, "Why do you talk that way?" Having listened carefully to what he has to say, it is time to follow his advice again; it is time to change the subject. FT

LITURGY

We kept building our steeples higher until
emissions streamed to thousands of miles away,
but distant lakes spit up frogspawn & fish,

so we built our steeples higher until —
though at first we couldn't tell — emissions
circled the globe to snow & rain

on us. So we built our steeples higher,
through mackerel clouds, the last chains
of food. Instead, we should have dug a hole

like a cathedral in the earth, receptacle for all
preternatural desire. Adream, we'll kneel
in pews there: flowers of stained glass above us

& censers swinging by, a choir advertising wind
tearing over our steeples higher & higher.

William Heyen

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Authority in the Church: Excavations Among the Ruins

Philip Turner

Authority is an issue that occupies a central place in current ecumenical discussion among the churches and it is one of enormous social and political importance as well. Accordingly, while the arguments that follow are directed most particularly to the question of authority in the churches, they have relevance as well, I hope, to analogous concerns in the larger society of which the churches are a part. With respect to church bodies, my premise is that, given our present ecclesial and social circumstances, the issue of authority will serve more to unify the churches than to divide them. I can only hope that history will prove me right.

I

By way of introduction, allow me to observe that we should not enter this discussion with the assumption that one or another of the churches has no problem while others do. The fact is that, though the churches share what I will call a common tradition about authority, that tradition is in the midst of a severe crisis. The crisis to which I refer has come about because we now exist in circumstances that are unfriendly to our tradition and that steadily weaken it.

What exactly is the common tradition to which I refer? To display adequately its breadth and complexity, we will have to look not at one but at four closely connected notions. Obviously, one of these is authority itself. The others are power, office, and liberty. As used in the common tradition (which has both a political and an ecclesiastical form), each of these ideas is related to the others and each contributes to the meaning of the other.

To begin, what might it mean to say of someone that he or she "has authority"? Within the common tradition, the meaning of the phrase becomes clear if we make a necessary distinction between authority and other forms of social control; in particular, domination, manipulation, and persuasion. Authority is a form of social control, or, if you prefer, a way of ordering the common life of the church or commonwealth, that lies between domination and manipulation on the one hand and persuasion on the other.

It matters not whether we speak of the body of Christ or the body politic, for authority to be authority and not a form of domination or manipulation those who have it cannot in its exercise rely on force and deception in a way that bypasses the liberty of those over whom it is exercised. Neither can it be said in reference either to church or to state that someone has authority if he or she has no right to require obedience from those who may not agree with particular decisions. Authority, be it exercised in the church or the body politic, is not the same thing as persuasion. To have authority, one must enjoy more than suasive power or the respect we attribute to "experts." People with authority have a right, even in cases of disagreement, to expect compliance with their justifiable commands and to apply sanctions if it is not forthcoming.

In sum, authority, lying as it does between domination and persuasion, is a form of social control that implies both the right to command and the liberty of those to whom commands may be issued. Authority has these characteristics in all realms of its operation—

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familial, ecclesial, or overtly "political." If the right to command is not coupled with recognition of liberty, then it is not authority that is being exercised but some form of tyranny.

I believe it will become clear in due course whether or not such a claim escapes nonsense, but first let us place on the table another of the central concepts noted above. Within the common tradition, authority is a notion that is necessarily linked to that of power. This linkage also applies both within the body of the church and within the body politic. The precise nature of the link, however, is far from obvious.

In itself, power is simply the ability to achieve purpose. Authority, however, does not always have the power to achieve its purpose. It is plain, therefore, that though authority and power are linked, they are not identical. The question, of course, is what precisely the nature of their relationship is.

A few basic observations will reveal an answer. We can all imagine a situation in which someone has great power and yet little or no authority. An obvious case is that of a tyrant, a bully, or a domineering spouse. People with power but not authority are known to us all, and they make us all very nervous. What we fear is that the purposes they may pursue are not ones we share.

Situations in which people have power but not authority are well fixed in imagination. Less well fixed are situations in which those with authority have no power. Indeed, such a situation may be both a logical and practical impossibility. It appears to be the case that those with authority may lack sufficient power to achieve their purposes, but that they cannot be without power altogether and retain authority. This is so because authority without power can no longer enforce its rightful commands, and without this ability, authority ceases to be.

Think of Nelson Mandela during the time of his incarceration. His authority was necessarily connected with the power he had among his people. To be sure, his power was limited and could be exercised only indirectly, but it is undeniable that it was real and that it was inseparably connected with the authority he had. Conversely, a total inability to use power would have destroyed his authority. If his authority had decreased, so would have his power. The reverse is also true. This example indicates, I believe, that while they are not identical, authority and power are necessarily linked.

We may observe on the basis of these comments that though authority requires some degree of power to remain authority, power does not require authority to remain itself. What does this observation suggest? It suggests, I believe, that within the common tradition, authority is understood as a way of making power responsible to a standard that is shared both by one who has authority and by those over whom it is exercised. In short, authority is a way of investing power with moral and religious accountability. It is a way of ordering power within a community in such a way that the power of the community itself is augmented and directed by purposes acceptable to the community as a whole. Authority, therefore, does not separate ruler and subject; it rather links them in a shared bond of fundamental belief and in a common form of life. Power disconnected from authority presupposes no such bond.

How then can these seemingly contradictory conclusions be reconciled? How can it be true both that those with authority have the right to expect compliance and the power to invoke sanctions, and that those over whom they exercise authority continue to enjoy liberty even though they are under authority?

Within the common tradition, the answer lies in the derivation of the word authority itself. In Roman society, an *auctor* was one who, by virtue of some combination of qualities, was thought to stand closer to the foundational beliefs and forms of life of the Roman people than others and was consequently assigned responsibility for protecting and augmenting those beliefs and ways of living. Hannah Arendt has argued that, within this tradition, the very idea of authority presupposes two other notions for its intelligibility, and these are the ones to which allusion has just been made.

Arendt goes on to argue that it is precisely the absence of these two supporting notions that, in the modern world, makes the notion of authority increasingly problematic. We have both an ecclesial and a political crisis of authority because, for various reasons, our society no longer has widely shared beliefs and forms of life to which common reference can be made. Beliefs and ways of life, save in respect to certain minimal attitudes and practices without which social life could not successfully be carried on, are matters of private rather than public business. Further, because our notions of equality constantly seek to exclude discussion of the personal qualities of excellence that make one a fit person to govern, we permit argument over what ought to be done in and through office but not over the personal qualities that might make one fit to hold it. To focus upon these characterological matters is to court the charge of "elitism," and so they are relegated to an ever-increasing extent to the realm of private taste and personal preference.

A word must be said immediately about the implications of Arendt's observations. They suggest that in so far as the churches are concerned, there is a more fundamental issue that lies behind the crisis in authority. The crisis concerns the faith of the church, its forms of life, and the virtue of its leaders. It would appear that the crisis in authority we now face has been caused by the dissolution of a common standard of belief (what used to be called the rule of faith) and a common form of life (what used to be called "the way"). The more profound issue signaled by the crisis

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in authority has to do with a decay in the communion of saints and a decline in the powers of soul enjoyed by those within that communion to whom authority is entrusted. A crisis in authority suggests the possibility that our churches have lost the will and lack the men and women with those powers of soul required to articulate, promulgate, and defend a rule of faith and a way of life that is indeed common to Christians.

More will be said in a moment about the implications of this situation, but first something more must be said about the argument to this point. It should now be fairly easy to see how, within the common tradition, authority and power are linked. Authority serves to direct power to the service of common purpose. It should also be reasonably clear that authority and liberty are related rather than opposed notions. Authority exists to protect and augment common beliefs and forms of life and so also the liberty of those who hold and follow them. Those who have authority and those who do not inhabit the same spiritual and moral universe. Authority, therefore, does not stand opposed to liberty but is logically linked to it in that authority presupposes its own free recognition on the basis of shared beliefs and forms of life. In ecclesiastical terms, the very notion of authority, as opposed to domination, requires also the notion of a communion of saints who enjoy a *sensus fidelium* in respect both to belief and ways of living.

Thus, if the commands of one with authority are perceived to lie within what might be called a "circle of permissibility" recognized by the church (or nation), those demands ought not to be considered infringements of liberty even if individuals or entire groups within the church disagree with particular decisions. Those with and those without authority are both accountable to the same tradition, and within that tradition the wise ordering of common life by the judgments of those with authority is believed to enhance rather than diminish the liberty of all. Within the common tradition, therefore, both those with and those without authority must give up some degree of autonomy out of respect for what is common to all and for the promotion of the greater liberty of all. Both those with and those without authority are bound by common restraints on individual opinion, or at least they ought to be.

It is therefore possible to say that, within the common tradition, the notions of authority, power, and liberty are linked by moral as well as logical and practical bonds. What, however, is the case with authority and office? It is this point that I take to be the most thorny one in respect both to ecclesial and political relations. That their connection is problematic can easily be shown by means of a well-known contrast, that between *de jure* and *de facto* authority. A person with *de jure* authority has a right to issue commands, make decisions, and enforce obedience on the basis of certain presupposed legal conventions, rules, and methods of entitlement. On the other hand, persons with *de facto* but not *de jure* authority enjoy no such right. Their commands are obeyed and their judgments followed not because of the office they hold but because of their personal qualities on the one hand and the attitudes of belief, respect, fear, and trust they evoke on the other. Compare, if you will, an elected church official and a "charismatic" leader and the point will become immediately clear.

These observations apply to authority and office in both church and society. The same sort of distinction between authority and office can be made in a number of other ways, but in all its guises it is intended to show that authority and office are not identical notions even if they are linked. Countless examples can be found of people who have authority but no office. One can imagine, however, only as an extreme possibility, a person who has office but no authority.

What might serve to bring about this latter possibility is an interesting subject for investigation, but the point of immediate relevance is a different one. Within the common tradition, authority and office are distinguishable, but they are linked in a way that allows the function of authority to be ordered and indeed limited. If, within the common tradition, authority provides limitations upon the acceptable use of power, office provides an order for and a defined and structured limitation upon the exercise of both authority and power. Office licenses the use of authority and power within a circle of procedure and rule.

How then is the link between authority and office to be fruitfully maintained? Within the common tradition there is, despite differences in polity between the churches, a long-recognized obligation enjoined upon all to seek in every way possible to ensure that *de facto* and *de jure* authority are combined whenever appointment to office is made. Thus, within the common tradition, moral education is supposed not only to prepare people to rule but to prepare them as well to recognize in their fellows the virtues necessary for the exercise of authority. In short, the common tradition holds that it is as important to give attention to the personal beliefs and qualities those given office ought to manifest as it is to the precise duties of the office they might hold.

Here we arrive at a point where the implications of the comments I have made should be noted. I find it ironical that I come from a tradition which, in its service for the consecration of a Bishop, places great emphasis upon the authority and power invested in the office of Bishop to teach and maintain the church's rule of faith. Irony is involved because it appears to be the case that the office of Bishop among Episcopalians has become increasingly separated from that authority by which some are given the right and duty to teach and uphold the church's rule of faith and

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forms of life. Episcopalians tend to elect for their bishops administrators whose primary aim is to manage an organization and to make room within it for any and all who might want to become a part of it. They accomplish this goal by playing down the need for common beliefs and forms of life and by giving their attention to the maintenance of processes and procedures that allow contradictory beliefs and ways of life to coexist with a minimum of tension within a single polity. Office and authority, understood as the right and means to maintain the common belief and life of the church, are distanced from one another as far as is possible. The purpose of office is not to maintain truth but to maintain a procedural unity that allows for people who are as different from one another as night is from day to coexist.

It is not for me to comment upon how a separation between authority and office may have occurred in other churches. Nevertheless, superficial observation leads me to believe that similar problems exist. My impression is that in all the churches there is a need once more to make effective links between authority and office, and that until this is done, little real progress will be made in ecumenical relations.

II

The basic outline of the common tradition is now complete. Within that tradition, both in its political and ecclesial expression, authority is a way of ordering power within a community in such a way that, at one and the same time, it supports and augments common beliefs and ways of life and is regularly and harmoniously conjoined with a structure of offices that gives order to the exercise of authority and power within the particular society in question.

These points being made, it is necessary to go on to make an additional one to the importance of which Alasdair MacIntyre has recently alerted us. In all his work, he has been anxious to remind his readers that though tradition unites, it also marks divisions. In fact, tradition gives expression to an extended argument. Tradition is neither static nor uniform. It lives by means of its own tensions. The important thing to remember, however, is that the tensions and arguments take place within a common frame of reference. If you will, tradition marks, over generations, the course of an argument between people who are members of the same family and who sometimes live in the same house.

It seems on first glance that, within this common frame of reference, the argument between the churches focuses most intensely upon the relation between authority and office (under which I include matters of jurisdiction and polity). To a far lesser degree does it concern the nature of authority itself and its relation to power and liberty. If these observations are accurate, more unites than divides the churches, at least in respect to the nature and function of authority.

I do not mean that I believe that the debate over the relation between authority and office is a trivial one. For that debate to be productive, however, certain other aspects of the common tradition must be brought into focus and made more conscious than now they are. The first of these concerns the justification of authority itself. An answer to the question of why it might be a good thing for one person to rule over another is far from obvious, but again the common tradition provides our churches answers that, in principle, they can share.

At this point, I must make some specific remarks about the Roman Catholic Church. Most of what are sometimes called the "mainline churches" have been shaped in varying degrees by the appropriations of Plato and Aristotle made respectively by St. Augustine and St. Thomas Aquinas. In the Platonic-Augustinian stream, authority is thought to be necessary because of human deficiency and sin. In the Aristotelian-Thomistic stream, authority is justified on the basis of human plenitude as well as human deficiency. Plato and Augustine justify authority as a means of ordering our "unruly wills and affections." Aristotle and Aquinas know of this need but believe the deeper justification of authority lies in the need to order toward a common good the very superabundance of particular goods possible for human beings. For one stream of thought, the justification of authority rests upon deficiency, and for the other, upon plenitude as well as deficiency.

As a generalization, I believe it can be said that Protestants have tended more to the Augustinian than to the Thomistic view and, for this reason, authority in the church has proved a particularly divisive issue between Roman Catholics and Protestants. Protestants and Catholics tend to look at authority from rather different perspectives, and on the whole I think it fair to say that the version of the common tradition to which Catholics are heir tends to give them a more positive attitude toward the function of authority in the church than that found among Protestants. We all may agree that, because of sin, some form of authority is necessary to ensure the good order of both church and state. Protestants are less apt to agree, however, that authority itself serves the positive function of promoting the plenitude of gifts and blessings ecclesial and political life are supposed to encompass.

It is, I hope, fitting for a Protestant like myself to defend the Catholic version of the common tradition as more adequate than the Protestant one. I do so out of no rejection of the insights of Augustine but rather out of a desire for an even more adequate account of authority's function. On numerous occasions the Roman Catholic philosopher Yves Simon spoke of the need in our modern world to maintain both the Augustinian and Thomistic streams of the common tradition in the midst of a society that sees in authority only a sign of human failure. On the whole, our society

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believes that the better we become, the less we need authority. Such views, Simon argued, are the reverse of the truth and tend to give moderns an instinctively hostile attitude toward the very notion of authority and a superficiality in their grasp of the profoundly central place authority occupies in a healthy social life.

This suspicion of authority has seeped into the churches themselves from the cultures that surround them. Nevertheless, the full complexity of this double stream of tradition is still available, and one way ahead in the ecumenical dialogue may be to grasp again the full complexity of the common tradition available to us. If the churches could manage such a reclamation, they might manage as well both to reconstitute their common life and to offer to all a view of authority now increasingly rare in the general life of society. It is a view that takes authority to be a positive good rather than a necessary evil alone and in so doing preserves a truth about human nature and society that stands in danger of loss.

Another point about the common tradition that requires note if we are to make progress toward sorting out the relation between authority and office is that, within it, authority is a term that is applied in a proper sense only to persons, either the divine Persons of the Trinity or human persons who act on God's behalf. Within the common tradition, both in its political and ecclesial expressions, authority belongs to agents rather than to "things."

It is important immediately to note that, for Protestants, Catholics, and Jews alike, all authority in heaven and earth belongs to God. For Protestants and Catholics that authority has been given by the Father to the Son and by the Son to those by whom, through the Spirit, it is exercised in the Son's name. We might argue, and no doubt would, about the way in which the various Persons of the Trinity are involved in these communications of authority, but in no case is authority "impersonal." God, who is the source of all authority, shares it only with persons. In no case is divine authority located in a thing.

No doubt someone will ask about those "things" we refer to as Holy Scripture, creeds, eucharistic canons, confessions, concords, ecclesial traditions, constitutions, canon law, and judicial precedents. Do they not also have authority? They are frequently spoken of as if they do, but such usage, despite the fact that it will surely continue, I believe to be misleading and in need of qualification. Books, creeds, confessions, canons, constitutions, and traditions cannot issue commands—only persons can. Since authority is defined by its right to command, and since only persons command, only persons have authority in the proper sense of the word.

What then do we do about phrases like "the authority of Scripture" or "the authority of the Constitution"? Such usage can be very misleading. If we must speak of the authority of these "things," we need also to be conscious that we are using the word "authority" in a derivative sense. Strictly speaking, the Bible has authority only when interpreted in the church by human agents whose authority to do so is in some way recognized. Similar things can be said of the Constitution. It is, therefore, necessary when making reference to "the authority of Scripture," etc., to be aware that one is saying something different than when one speaks of the authority of a Bishop or indeed of God. What one is saying is that someone with authority or in authority, in giving commands and making judgments, must justify his actions by reference to certain "things" thought to contain or give expression to the will of God and so also to the beliefs and ways of life common to God's people. The beliefs and ways of life of God's people rest not on their own authority but upon the authority of God who approves or disapproves of them, establishes or disestablishes them, commands or forbids them. In the case of authority in the church, Scripture, creeds, and confessions are, therefore, points to which reference is or ought to be made by those with authority in order to show that their determinations about common belief and life are indeed Christianly apt—are indeed in accord with what God approves, establishes, or commands. Any or all of these "things" may or must be referred to, but they do not "have authority" in the proper sense of the word.

The point of all this is that the very logic of the notion of authority implies that though there is a *prima facie* obligation to obey the determinations of authority, there is also an obligation on the part of those who have authority to give an account of their judgments by showing that they indeed fall within what God approves, establishes, or commands—within the bounds of permissibility previously mentioned. Authority, in all the churches, must give such an account of itself by reference to those sources that enshrine the heritage of the community and, in like manner, those under authority are required by the inner logic of the common tradition to examine the functioning of the authority and challenge it if, in its use of power, it steps outside the aforementioned "circle of permissibility." One can say, therefore, that these sources or foundations, to which all members of a commonwealth are responsible, are "authoritative," but, strictly speaking, it is an incorrect use of words to say that, in and of themselves and apart from interpretation and application by human agents, they have authority. What our churches are arguing over, therefore, is not the authority of Scripture or confessions but over those things to which reference *must* be made when authority is exercised, over their correct interpretation, and over their relative weight in settling disputes.

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III

It is now time to ask where this formal analysis of the notion of authority leads. It leads directly to a comparison of the common tradition with the notions of authority currently operative in our culture. These notions rest on very different premises, and, as the "novelties" associated with what we might call "the new authority" are described, it will become clear that they have seeped into the mind of the churches to a far greater extent than perhaps we are willing to admit. The fact is that the common tradition stands in danger of being eaten away by another, and to the extent to which this happens in any church, it becomes that much more difficult for that church to remain a church. To the extent that the hostile tradition about authority takes hold, a church becomes not so much a church but a collection of what Robert Bellah has recently called "life-style enclaves."

What is the nature of the hostile tradition? According to the common tradition, authority is derivative from more basic social agreements. Within it, for authority to remain itself and not be transformed into some other form of social control, those who hold it must reflect, embody, and promote shared beliefs and intentions. The contemporary view makes no such assumption. On the contrary, authority is said to rest upon the very absence of a wide range of shared beliefs and ways of living. Within modern and postmodern cultures, authority functions not to further what is common but to insure a social order within which people can follow differing beliefs and ways of life without in the process doing harm one to another.

Jeffrey Stout and Alasdair MacIntyre have both pointed out that this view of authority was born of the inability of Roman Catholics and Protestants to reach agreement on the basic beliefs that were to inform public life. The contemporary view of authority was born from the religious wars that followed the Reformation and remains, despite its limitations and dangers, a necessary political notion within a "pluralistic" social order. Nevertheless, when this notion seeps without critical assessment from the political arena into the foundations of the church, the edifice of the latter begins to crumble, and it is to call attention to the extent of the decay that this essay has been given the somewhat dramatic subtitle, "Excavations Among the Ruins."

What is the "socio-logic" of the contemporary view of authority? According to this view, authority is justified not by what is common, but by irreconcilable differences in what people believe and in the ways in which they choose to live their lives. If, therefore, one is to have authority across the spectrum of society and not within a small group or "life-style enclave" alone, one must aspire to office. It is office rather than authority *per se* that gives access to power over a diversity of people. In our brave new world and in our bureaucratically organized churches, office functions according to agreed-upon procedures on the basis of which strangers may relate one to another within a common organization. The authority of office is not one based in common belief and life but in "agreements" and "rights" on the basis of which buffer zones are placed between persons who are not civic friends or brothers and sisters in the Lord but adversaries with differing interests.

In both church and state, the extent of the authority one enjoys as an officeholder is not delimited by beliefs shared with the people over whom authority is exercised. It is rather defined by policies and rules of procedure attached to the office in question. These policies and procedures are not designed to augment common belief and ways of living but to insure that individuals have maximum opportunity to make their own choices about these matters. Consent or liberty are thus defined not in relation to what is common (though not necessarily uniform), but in relation to what will promote private interest or public utility.

If the justification of authority has changed, so also have the qualifications for its possession. No longer is it necessary to stand close to a common court or exhibit virtues prized by all. What is necessary is to have the skills of a manager and the knowledge of a technician. People are not to be led, but managed in such a way that their various desires and "life plans" can be satisfied within the bounds of a reasonable amount of social harmony. Authority, therefore, is not to protect and promote what is common but rather to insure that everyone is "included" in the distribution of social benefits.

"Inclusivity," which in the context of the new authority is interpreted as the amalgamation of people with vastly different beliefs and ways of life, thus becomes not only the method but also the end of authority's exercise. An ecclesial and political version of art for art's sake, inclusion for the sake of inclusion becomes the going wisdom of the day and from this wisdom the notion of sharing and serving a common good is steadily evacuated. The exercise of authority is not located socially within a commonwealth but within a society of strangers who define themselves in opposition one to another by rights, possessions, and differing "life styles." Within the amalgam, people increasingly define themselves by what they demand. Voluntarism defines religious as well as political communities. Within all social institutions interest groups multiply like amoebas.

The contrasts drawn between these two views of authority have been made as stark as possible in order to highlight the differences between them. In real life, both within general social life and within the life of the churches, the two notions mix and mingle incessantly. Perhaps it is fair to say that they contend one with another for possession of our souls.

The state of the battle varies from church to church, but it is the same battle that is raging in each case.

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In this battle, a view which presupposes that it is not only impossible but wrong for authority to protect and further common beliefs and ways of life gains increasing control of our imagination, and as it does it erodes the foundations necessary for a church to remain a church.

Reactions to these social processes vary from church to church. Within liberal circles the reaction is to blend more adequately with the surrounding culture by adapting "the new authority" to ecclesial purposes. In more conservative quarters, the reaction is often quite reactionary and authoritarian. Neither "liberalism" nor "reaction" will do, however. Neither has the strength to maintain a church that is indeed, "One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic." Such an outcome depends, I believe, upon the reclamation of what I have dared term "the common tradition." It may be, as T. S. Eliot said, that the conditions for such a reclamation seem "unpropitious." It is nonetheless true to say that, in each of the churches, the work of the next generation is just such a reclamation project. It is my belief that this very project will serve to display the One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic Church across our denominational boundaries, and, in so doing, promote the sort of unity God has in mind for us. It may also display the common tradition about authority to a society increasingly in need of its resources and thereby make a contribution to the health of society that is as welcome as it is unexpected. FT

At the Taj Mahal in Atlantic City

As I was splitting a pair of queens to double my sawbuck bet,
someone said "He's here," and here he was — four bodyguards
to part the waves, a blonde bimbo on each arm
with whom to swim. I swivelled in my chair to greet him,

held out my hand — brushed back by one of his goons.
"Don," I yelped, and for a split second he did cut his eyes
my way. Our table got a thumb's-up sign, and then
the man was gone. I checked myself for wounds:

in the shell crater at mind's center, I sought poor
India, the formal garden at Agra, that temple and mausoleum
of white marble risen from love and love's passion,
but in the green and ringing light beneath this ocean,

I was all shrapnel and blood, but lived,
so signalled a veiled servant for another rum & coke,
turned back to blackjack, hit and broke both hands,
then left to give my last two C-notes to the slots.

William Heyen

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God in Public Life: Rehabilitating the "Orders of Creation"

Carl E. Braaten

The intent of this essay is a rehabilitation of the Lutheran idea of the "orders of creation." That might seem to many an impossible task, something like trying to raise the Titanic. It is certainly a dangerous task, because it draws one into an area of Lutheran theological ethics that some German Lutherans under Hitler managed to give a bad reputation and that Karl Barth in fact identified as the rotten core of the *Deutsche Christen* ideology. It must be fully acknowledged that the idea of the orders of creation played into the hands of the Nazi ideology of *Blut und Boden*. But the misuse of a Christian belief is insufficient cause to dispense with it. It is difficult to think of any Christian doctrine that has not at some time been subject to misuse. The Fascists of Spain had a fighter plane that bore the insignia "Christ the King." If misuse were the criterion of elimination, the whole of Christian dogmatics would have to be abolished.

My purpose is to show how the doctrine of the orders of creation can be revised and why in fact it is necessary to do so. After some preliminary discussion, I will provide a brief sketch of such a revised theology of orders, and finally offer some observations on the application of that theology to current discussions of the role of the church in society.

I

The Dutch theologian A. A. van Ruler said in one of his books that sex, politics, and religion are the only subjects worth talking about. Martin Luther would have agreed, for these concerns happen to coincide with Luther's own threefold division of the orders: *status economicus*, *status politicus*, and *status ecclesiasticus*. Luther collapsed sexual identity and family status into the economic order because the household in the broadest sense was the basic sphere in which people secured all the necessities of livelihood. Whether or not Luther ever explicitly referred to orders of creation (*Schöpfungsordnungen*), he did use a number of related terms, such as *ordo*, *ordo divina*, *ordo naturalis*, *ordinatio*, *ordinatio divina*, *creatura dei*, *weltliches Regiment*, *potestas ordinata*, and others. It is clear in any case that those Lutherans who developed an explicit theology of the orders of creation self-consciously drew their basic ideas from Luther.

The modern form of the doctrine of the orders of creation goes back to nineteenth-century German Lutheranism. Adolf von Harless is usually credited with a reaffirmation of a theology of orders, speaking at first not of the orders of *creation* but of the orders of the *Creator*. The point of this doctrine is to affirm that Christians, like all other human beings, exist in a framework of universal orders that are there prior to and apart from belief in Christ or membership in the church. In this view, God has placed all human beings in particular structures of life such as nationality, race, sexual identity, family, work, or government that in some form or other are simply givens of creaturely existence. The law and commandments of God are revealed through these common created structures of existence and function apart from and in tension with the special revelation of God in the gospel of Jesus Christ. This means that there is a double revelation of God, and this duality permeates the whole system of theological categories and lies at

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the base of the familiar distinctions between God hidden and revealed (*deus absconditus et deus revelatus*), creation and redemption, law and gospel, the two kingdoms, and so on.

Karl Barth radically rejected all these distinctions, positing instead a theology of the one Word of God from which all structures, orders, commandments, and ethical norms for Christian living in the world must be derived. One might call this the soteriological captivity of creation, because it succeeds in emptying the world of its own meaning as a realm of divine governance and human involvement prior to and apart from the biblical story of salvation culminating in Christ. I would argue that we need to break this one Word of God in two, restoring the validity of the distinction for the sake of the integrity of the gospel.

This issue is central to the definition of the role of the church in the world today. If, as the Barthians would have it, the world is void of God's presence and activity apart from the gospel, it follows that Christians are called upon to fill the void. And that is no small job. In this view, the church bears the only Word of God there is, and this Word establishes the reality and meaning of everything going on in the world, its politics, economics, and cultural life. It is this view of things that accounts for the contemporary politicizing of Christian endeavor, with the churches exhausting themselves in trying to tell the world what to do, including issuing directives for social and political action. This might conceivably be a good thing if it worked, but it doesn't. Worse still—and more to the point of my concern—the translation of the one Word of God into direct social and political terms has meant that the churches neglect the message for which they *do* have sole responsibility, that which constitutes their specific *raison d'être*, and which no other agency in the world is called on or is competent to proclaim: the gospel of Holy Scripture which has the power to make people wise unto salvation through faith in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 3:15).

The heyday of the neo-Lutheran theology of the orders of creation goes back to Germany in the 1930s. There began then an outpouring of books and articles on the subject by Werner Elert, Paul Althaus, Walther Künneth, Friedrich Gogarten, and we may include Emil Brunner, who, though not a Lutheran, wrote several books on the orders of creation. About Brunner's effort Karl Barth wrote, "I do not fully understand the intention and spirit of [his work]. . . . What I do not understand is from what source and in what way Brunner claims to know these orders. . . . We cannot help feeling that at the root of his conception of 'orders' there lies something akin to the familiar notion of a *lex naturae* which is immanent in reality and inscribed upon the heart of man, so that it is directly known to him. But does not this mean that there is not only a second (or first) revelation of God before and beside that of the Word of His grace, but also a second (or first) knowledge of God beside that of this Word of grace?"

Barth's relentless attack on natural theology motivated his rejection of the orders of creation, because of its family resemblance to the idea of natural law. The family resemblance consists in the idea that people do not need to know Jesus Christ to have some knowledge of what is right and good through the law of creation and conscience, that is, by way of "the things that have been made" (Romans 1:20). Yet for all the affinity between the Thomist-Aristotelian theory of natural law and the Lutheran theology of the orders of creation, we will need to observe the fundamental differences between them that Barth's criticism blurs.

A rehabilitation of the "orders of creation" must take into account its weaknesses and the validity of many of the criticisms leveled against it. A major criticism is that the whole notion of orders suffers from a static picture of creation. These fundamental orders seem to have a supralapsarian essence outside of history, with all the markings of a mythological primeval time. This theology of orders fails to appreciate that we live inescapably in the changing structures of historical development. Thus Wolfhart Pannenberg rightly asks: "But are there really ordinances which constitute equally all forms of society that have developed in history, ordinances whose historical expressions are merely variants? Is not each concrete form of society thoroughly determined by its history?" Helmut Thielicke has taken this criticism seriously in his *Theological Ethics*, speaking of the various structures of our common life, such as the state, law, economics, etc., as "orders of history" rather than as "orders of creation," and presenting them in an infralapsarian way as "orders of the divine patience, given because of our 'hardness of heart' (Matthew 19:8)."

The infusion of historical relativity into the orders can also break their linkage to an ethical conservatism that finds it necessary to stand against every revolutionary development, thus denying the freedom of God to do any new thing in the world. If the world is pictured not as an eternal cosmos but as an historical process, then the orders will not be placed in a timeless realm above and beyond history. Just as Lutheran theology criticized natural law on account of its abstract, formalistic, and unhistorical conception of human nature, so also the idea of a fixed constellation of permanent orders of life can be criticized as untrue to the dynamic character of historical development. Acknowledging the historicity of God's commands to people in the common associations of life should discourage every ideological absolutization of transient structures of existence.

Furthermore, it is necessary to qualify the idea of the orders of creation by the recognition that the

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original creation has been distorted by the fall into a universal condition of rebellion against God's design for the world, and that the Christian faith longs for the restoration and fulfillment of creation through the history of God's redemption in Jesus Christ. For this reason, some Lutheran theologians prefer to speak of "orders of preservation," taking into account what God is doing to sustain the world under the conditions of sin, even using means sin-laden themselves, such as war and capital punishment, to fight against still more serious attacks on the goodness of God's creation. God's preserving creativity is an expression of the continuing creativity of God until God's final purpose for the world reaches its completion in the eschaton.

The Barthian attack on the orders of creation was so devastating that some Lutherans veered to the radical polar extreme of situation ethics. In the period after World War II, theology was awash in an existentialist deconstruction of ontology, ethical norms, fundamental principles, and traditional values, so much so that Christian moral instruction ceased almost entirely. The churches have not yet recovered from the abandonment of serious moral discourse. We have lost our way in a labyrinthine antinomianism that leaves it up to each individual to intuit his or her way out of moral dilemmas. In any ethical situation Christians are told to rely on what the Spirit nudges them to do on the spur of the existential moment, which in practice often amounts to people doing pretty much what everybody else is doing. This approach to moral questions has now been adopted by the churches, so that eliciting sample opinions from a cross-section of the population becomes an avenue to the discovery of God's will on any issue. The pluralism and relativism built into this sociological approach are the latest substitutes for the theology of law and the orders of creation that framed the ethical discussions of the church in the past. We are mired in a moral marshland; we have no firm ground under our feet. Having wallowed in this swamp long enough, it may be time to look back to the sturdier traditions of the Lutheran heritage, and rather than condemn or forget them, seek to recuperate and revise them. Thus the following brief sketch of a theology of the orders of creation.

II

1. We may begin with a definition. The orders of creation are the common structures of human existence, the indispensable conditions of the possibility of social life. Through these structures human beings are bound to each other in various relationships and mutual service. Luther said: "You will always be in a station. You are either a husband, wife, son, daughter, servant, or maid. . . . Saint Peter says that the graces and gifts of God are not all of one kind, but various. And each one is to realize what his own are and use them so that he may be of use to others. What a fine thing it would be if everyone took care of his own, while at the same time thereby serving his neighbor. So they would journey amicably together on the right road to heaven."

2. The orders of creation are givens that can be experienced and recognized by common human reason apart from faith and theology. So Luther could say: "God does not have to have Christians as magistrates; it is not necessary, therefore, that the ruler be a saint; he does not need to be a Christian in order to rule, it is sufficient that he possess reason." Everyone participates in some way in the political, economic, and familial systems of society and is called upon to contribute to each of them in the service of others.

3. Those who believe in God acknowledge the common structures of human existence as the creation of God. Reason can discern the orders; only faith can read them as the creation of God. Faith is the presupposition of a *theology* of the orders of creation. By faith Christians confess "that God has created me and all that exists," which is something quite different than claiming to know that once upon a time in the far distant past God created the very same structures in which people now participate. The confession of creation must be set free from its bondage to the myth of protological beginnings if that means the reading of the first eleven chapters of Genesis in a literal-historical manner.

4. We may speak of the fundamental universal structures of life as orders of creation because God continues to create these possibilities of existence in spite of the fact that we live in a world of sin and death. The confession of Christians that we are creatures of God is coupled with the confession that we are the children of Adam and Eve, and therefore fallen and sinful members of the human race. We live in the tension between the dignity of creation and the dis-grace of sin, between the joy of being God's creatures and the shame of perverting this status. The orders of creation are subject to the conditions of sin and death; nevertheless they are still the object of God's continuing and present act of creating, as Luther so clearly stressed. God did not create once upon a time and then let things run their course, as the deists maintained. For Christians, every act of preservation on this side of sin and death is still an act of ongoing creation. So we would argue that we have a right to speak of the orders of creation in the interim between the fall and the final consummation, with the proviso that there are no orders of creation that are not shot through with the powers of sin and death.

5. The orders of creation are the media through which the command of God addresses the conscience of all human beings. God speaks the law through the structures of creation, impinging on the human

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conscience. Spanning the entire spectrum of creation, whether in terms of sex, politics, or religion, Christians affirm that God is speaking through the law written on human hearts, with individual consciences picking up the signals, either accusing or excusing them, until that day when God will finally judge all things by the criterion of Jesus Christ (Romans 1:15-16). There are, for Christians, two steps here: God speaks the law through the ordinary things of daily life; but his extraordinary Word is spoken in the Endtime through Jesus Christ, who fulfills and transcends the law of creation.

6. Faith in Jesus Christ places all the orders of creation under the spotlight of the eschatological kingdom and rule of God. This means that the orders are relativized and subject to the conditions of historical life; they cannot evolve into a state of perfection, thus establishing the kingdom of God. There is no marrying or giving in marriage in the kingdom of God (Matt. 22:30). Nor is there need for law and force, for everything will give way to the service of love. In the Christian scheme, the orders correspond to this world of sin and death, and will cease when the kingdom comes. As such, they are provisional and penultimate. So Luther could say that the exercise of power by the authorities of law and government constitutes the "alien work" of God, not his "proper work." They are the work of the "left hand of God."

7. Just as the orders of creation cannot be equated with the kingdom of God, neither must they be separated and kept unrelated to the coming kingdom. Christians believe that God acts through the orders to preserve the world and history until the kingdom comes. Luther argued that the task of government was to keep the peace so that God could gather his people through the preaching of the gospel. That is the *political* function of the orders. The orders are also, in the Lutheran view, a school in which all citizens are educated to care for each other, to do their duties even against their egoistic drives, and to use their "liberty and ability to achieve civil righteousness," as Article XVIII of the Apology of the Augsburg Confession puts it. This summons to civil righteousness may be called the *pedagogical* function of the orders. Such civil righteousness is not the same as spiritual righteousness, namely, the true pure love which only the Holy Spirit can work in human hearts against the impulses of the flesh. Between these two types of righteousness stands the radical event of conversion, the new birth, which no amount of good thinking, willing, or feeling can bring about. It is for Christians the miracle of grace, communicated thorough the Word in the power of the Spirit.

8. There has been a continuing debate in Lutheran theology about the so-called third use of the law, that is, as a positive guide to Christian behavior. However one may come down on that, I would agree with Paul Althaus that there is a third function of the orders in relation to the kingdom of God, and that is the symbolic function. The liberty, peace, and justice for which we strive in our worldly existence may be seen as parables of the kingdom. While they do not establish the kingdom, they may be seen as signs and anticipations of the eternal *shalom* for which the whole creation longs and waits.

9. God is the Lord of life and therefore sets limits to the demands that the orders place upon us. None of the orders may be so absolutized as to abolish the others. All the claims and commandments of the second table of the law (what we owe to each other) are limited by the freedom and sovereignty of God in the first table of the law (what we owe to God alone). Thus Jesus' unsettling—and otherwise inexplicable—words: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple" (Luke 14:26). The law that is mediated through the orders is not unconditional. It is always subject to Peter's principle: "We must obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:29). It is always a fine art to observe the proper dialectic between the first and the second tables of the law.

10. God continues to order the natural life of humanity by means of the concrete historical structures that impinge on our existence—the particular systems of government, economics, and family that frame our life. There is among the orders no ideal state, no ideal marriage, no ideal economic system, as though God's Word should be equated with some abstract ideal structures of life. We are summoned in the Lutheran perspective to divine obedience and neighborly service within the framework of concrete human historical structures, as questionable and ambiguous as they always are. We cannot wait for the right time and place to obey God and serve our neighbors. This does not suggest an uncritical submission to the status quo. Every structure of life must be examined as to whether it measures up to God's intention for it, whether in its current form it works for the common good in the service of justice, liberty, and community.

11. The concept of ambiguity is useful to express the idea that the orders of creation are good as created by God, and yet permeated by the law of sin and death. We live on this side of Eden, in a fallen world, in which demonic, destructive forces are intertwined with the structures of divine preservation. The same structures of life work both good and evil. Divine and demonic powers struggle for control; at times the battle seems to tilt in favor of the one side over the other. The history of theology is replete with denials of this hard truth of divine-demonic ambiguity. Types of monistic idealism reject the reality of the demonic;

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there is in such views no Satan. The evil that strikes us is not real; it is, as seen from a higher perspective, but one chord struck in the wonderful melody of life. Death is thus only a passing phase of the grand march of the Spirit in the unfolding epic of cosmic evolution. It is but a means to life. The dialectics of idealism denies the reality of sin and evil, the demonic and the satanic forces that penetrate all the structures of life. On the other hand, there are old and new forms of Manichaean dualism that surrender the structures of this life to the devil, and deny that those structures come from the benevolent hand of God. For people of this persuasion, the world is most assuredly going to hell in a handbasket. Against both the foregoing views, the truth is that life in all of its dimensions occurs under the law of ambiguity; we experience it as both blessing and curse, sometimes predominantly one more than the other, but never exclusively one without the other.

12. The ambiguity of life in the tension between the blessing of creation and the curse of death means that all of our actions participate in this ambiguity. We cannot obey God without at the same time giving the devil his due. It is not the case that the ambiguity lies merely on the subjective side, in the person as such. Luther stressed that the person is always a sinner, whose will is in bondage. But so are the structures as such in bondage, so that no matter what one does and however noble one's intentions, there is something of evil in the result. That is the dreadful truth about our ambiguous existence. Luther saw the wrath of God at work in the fact that we as sinners cannot fulfill any of God's commands without at the same time entrapping ourselves in sin. God's wrath is poured out upon humanity in the fact that by the very zeal we exert to do our duty and excel in our vocation, we contribute to the dynamics of sin and death in the world. Order and chaos, good and evil, blessing and curse, moral man and immoral society remain so intermixed that those who look at reality unblinkingly may be tempted to doubt that God is Lord of this world and to sink into skepticism and nihilism.

13. For Lutheran Christians, such despair in face of the universal and radical human predicament can only be overcome through the gospel, which announces forgiveness of sins and redemption of life under the conditions of an ambiguous world chained by sin and death. The gospel proclaims the victory of Jesus Christ over sin, death, and the power of Satan, and inaugurates hope that ultimately and fundamentally God will establish his rule over all his enemies and ours. The gospel declares that we receive forgiveness under the conditions of life within the framework of the orders; it does not beckon us to forsake them and escape into a make-believe world of sinless perfectionism. That was the temptation of monasticism that Luther challenged.

14. The message of the gospel is not only forgiveness but also redemption from the power of death and the demonic forces at work in history. The crucified and risen Jesus Christ, Christians believe, has defeated Satan and death. Colossians 2:15 states, "He disarmed the principalities and powers and made public example of them, triumphing over them in him." Christians affirm that the dynamics of death and the demonic powers have been defeated and put to death in the cross and resurrection of Jesus Christ. That is the gospel—the Christ event. But this victory is not manifest in all reality. Death has been defeated—and still people die. We live between the times. In Christ the ambiguity of creation and the fall under the dominion of death and Satan has been overcome, but the rest of creation waits for the final victory until the eschaton.

15. The freedom of the Christian comes through faith in the victory of Jesus Christ. It is a participatory freedom. In the assurance of forgiveness the Christian is called to do battle against the forces of sin and death that effectively penetrate the orders of creation, and is free to continue to struggle and suffer within them, always seeking to do God's will. Although only death will liberate us from sin, we are already free to fight against its effects in public and personal realms, in the continuing moral decisions of everyday life.

III

Those with limited tolerance for schematic arguments may find in the above but the dry bones of a dogmatic skeleton of abstract ideas. Its justification consists in whatever value it may have in laying foundations. Even then, most people are more interested in whether the house is fit to live in and how it is furnished than whether the foundations are solid. Let me then draw out some implications that follow from this understanding of the orders of creation with respect to the church in public life.

We do not live in a theocracy and so we cannot expect that God's work and rule in the public orders of life will be mediated by a hierarchy of priests, preachers, or prelates. It is not conceivable that we will return to the society of ancient Israel, medieval Europe, Calvin's Geneva, or modern Iran. So we cannot entertain the idea that God orders public life through laws and directives coming from organized religion or the institutional church. Nor do Christians understand Jesus Christ as some kind of Ayatollah, communicating a blueprint of an ideal society and calling upon his believers to make laws, pronounce judgment, and execute his will in the political, economic, and social spheres. For this reason also we have rejected the Barthian christocratic scheme which starts from the one Word of God, Jesus Christ, then extends its reach centrifugally from the inside out, from the inner circle of believers to the wider human

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community. If the community of believers were to coincide with the community of citizens, that might be a plausible scheme. But when, as in our situation, there is no such coincidence, the believers' vision of society must be imposed on the larger number of unbelievers through force, on the model of the inquisitors and the Hezbollah. The theocratic or the christocratic ways of representing the divine will for the public orders are both thoroughly reprehensible, though they are always temptations for true believers who deplore the secularization of life and wish to put God back into the "naked public square." We must, therefore, oppose the current efforts to re-Christianize the public orders and to legislate the will of the churched upon the unchurched, as though Christians have a special revelation for the political and social conditions of life today.

It is for these reasons that Lutherans seem to me to be in an ideal position to deal with the challenges of a pluralistic secular society. The doctrine of the orders of creation goes hand in glove with the Lutheran doctrine of the two kingdoms. In this view, the church and its members have a double identity. As members of the church, Christians are concerned with the gospel. But the God of the gospel is for them also the God of the law, at work in the secular realm where the churched and the unchurched share a common ground. This scheme allows that the rule of God in the public orders is not primarily in the hands of believers but is communicated to all persons through the natural orders and can be grasped through conscience and moral reason.

There is for Lutheran Christians no secular world in which God is dead; there is no empty world into which believers have to introduce the law of God for the first time. God is at work through his ongoing creativity and through the law that orders life in the world. The law is an instrument of divine activity and confronts all persons in their actual empirical existence. There is no sphere of life where God is not active through the law that impinges on the human conscience. God is universally present as the pressure that drives people to do justice even when they are not just, to earn a living for their family even when they are lazy, to give to others their due even though they are filled with selfish desires.

Life could not go on for a minute without the pressures which God exerts, whether they are recognized as such or not, in the life of every individual. Lutherans believe that we experience God's law as the driving force behind the demands that human beings impose on each other as they live in community. The criterion that measures which demands are legitimate and have God as their anonymous author is available to all people in the ideal of justice.

And what is justice? The core of justice in all times and places is care for the neighbor. The force required to administer justice through law is the "strange work" of love (*opus alienum*) in public life. The whole law is summarized in the commandment: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Therefore, a particular law is just when it functions in the care of human beings, suppressing evil deeds and rewarding the good.

Luther spoke of the orders of creation—family, state, work—as the masks of God (*larvae dei*), masks of the hidden living God. Gustaf Wingren speaks of the presence of God incognito as "the anonymous demand." There is no life free of the pressures that God exerts, pressures arising from within the depth of our being and bearing down upon us through the presence of others. Psalm 139 expresses this conviction in beautiful words:

> O Lord, thou has searched me and known me!
> Thou knowest when I sit down and when I rise up;
> thou discernest my thoughts from afar.
> Thou searchest out my path and my lying down,
> and art acquainted with all my ways.
> Even before a word is on my tongue,
> lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether.
> Thou dost beset me behind and before,
> and layest thy hand upon me.
> Such knowledge is too wonderful for me;
> it is high, I cannot attain it.
> Whither shall I go from thy Spirit?
> Or whither shall I flee from thy presence?
> If I ascend to heaven, thou art there!
> If I make my bed in Sheol, thou art there!

Lutherans do not expect salvation from what God is doing in the kingdom of the left hand. Our actions to promote peace, justice, and liberation are not on the same plane as the qualitatively other kingdom which God has brought from beyond our world of possibilities through Jesus Christ. The eschatological kingdom of God in the ministry of Christ and his church does not come about through the politics of this world, which always and necessarily involves compulsion and violence. "My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight . . . but my kingship is not from this world" (John 18:36).

The task of the Christian church is to preach Christ and all that pertains to God's eschatological message of salvation that comes solely through Christ. The church understands itself to be the first heirs of this kingdom through faith alone, worked by the power of the Holy Spirit through the means of grace, Word and Sacraments. If this were all that God were doing in the world, we would have no problem of the two kingdoms. But Christians affirm that in fact God works through other means, the worldly means of politics, economics, family life, and so forth. And God works differently through these natural orders of life. Therein lies the essence of the necessary

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distinction between the two kingdoms of God. Any church or theology that dismisses this distinction promotes the most pernicious things in both the church and the world. The content of the gospel as eternal salvation is either reduced to a social message to ameliorate the conditions of life in this world, or it is equated with the loftiest wisdom of philosophy and heroic examples of moral achievement. So Jesus is placed roughly on a par with Plato, Confucius, or Marx. The eternal peace of humanity with God, received by faith on account of Christ's victory over sin, death, and the power of Satan, is dismissed as pie in the sky to be exchanged for the various approximations of peace and happiness that in good times this world also knows about and experiences. To distinguish, as Christians must, eternal peace from earthly peace, eternal salvation from this-worldly liberation, social justice from the righteousness of faith does not diminish or discredit the temporal social-historical dimensions of what is true and good and beautiful. These things are also works of God in the ongoing orders of creation. One kingdom need not be played off against the other. Both have their own validity under the twofold activity of the living God.

The church and its members have a special and exclusive calling to be witnesses of God's promise of eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. No other structure in the world can be called on to promise eternal salvation, and when such salvific claims are made in the name of some nation, race, social class, religion, or ideology, the church must fight such idolatry and blasphemy with all its means of persuasion, even to the point of martyrdom. Such Christian exclusiveness is under heavy attack these days, not only from the side of the world, as one might expect, but from within the church itself, its various councils, bureaucracies, and theologies. There is within the church a fifth-column movement, a conspiracy against the gospel itself, a subversion of Christianity from within its own ranks.

Those who confuse liberation movements with eternal salvation convert the gospel into an ideological promotion of political and social transformation. The doctrine of the two kingdoms can guard believers from this confusion. Augustinian Christians understand that we cannot expect too much from the orders of creation in a fallen world. Inflated expectations can only lead to fanaticism and revolutionary violence or to despair and disillusionment. We all have had the experience of persons imbued with revolutionary fervor in their youth who become cynical opportunists in their maturity.

If the Lutheran confessing movement has stood for anything, it has waged war against works-righteousness in the name of the gospel. But that is *the only kind of righteousness that we can expect from* the most virtuous accomplishments in the orders of public life. At the heart of Lutheran understanding is the insistence that the righteousness of Christ available through faith alone is something totally other. It is totally a gift from God, received freely through faith apart from the works of the law. Those who play by the rules of the game in the orders of creation may win prizes commensurate with their efforts, but all that has nothing to do with securing eternal peace with God.

I have argued that Christians need to rehabilitate the doctrine of the orders of creation so that they will not legalize the gospel to fill the structures of public life. God is already at work there through the law of creation that is other than the gospel. People don't have to be Christians to read and understand this law. Christians and non-Christians are on the same footing in the orders of creation, subject to the same criteria and judged by the same standards. The grace of God in Jesus Christ will not buy out a failing business. Conversely, the best government or social system in the world cannot forgive sin, overcome death, or secure eternal salvation. That, Christians understand, is what the gospel does, and it is ultimately for the sake of the gospel's integrity and uniqueness that the church needs to rehabilitate the old Lutheran doctrine of the orders of creation. FT

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The Achievement of Jacques Maritain

Michael Novak

Although the twentieth century was often proclaimed by the church to be the "Age of the Laity," it remains true that most Catholic discourse is still taken up with the words of popes, bishops, priests, and sisters. Nonetheless, as in the nineteenth century so in the twentieth, a number of lay men and women have made intellectual contributions to religious discourse of such magnitude as to place not just Roman Catholics but the entire body of Christians in their debt. Of these, no one has been so influential in so many different spheres as Jacques Maritain (1882-1973), a man who, in addition to his intellectual stature, was widely esteemed for his holiness of life.

His range was truly catholic. Perhaps no one in any tradition has written more beautifully of the subject he addressed in his book *Creative Intuition in Art and Poetry*. (So lovely is that book that often, while reading it as an undergraduate, I had to put it down and go for a long walk, my heart burning with more than it could bear.) In political and social thought, no Christian has ever written a more profound defense of the democratic idea and its component parts, such as the dignity of the person, the sharp distinction between society and the state, the role of practical wisdom, the common good, the transcendent anchoring of human rights, transcendent judgment upon societies, and the interplay of goodness and evil in human individuals and institutions. Indeed, in the thrust that this body of thought gave to Christian Democratic parties after World War II, Maritain gained the right to be thought of as one of the architects of Christian Democratic politics both in Europe and Latin America.

Nonetheless, it is perhaps in his profound grasp of the metaphysics of the *philosophia perennis* that one must seek the essence of Maritain's achievement. More clearly and subtly than anyone else in modern times, and over a larger body of materials, Maritain grasped the "intuition of being" that animates the deepest stratum of Catholic intellectual life. For him, this was at once an intuition of charity as well as of being. He chose most often to express this intuition philosophically—philosophy, not theology, was his vocation—but his vision of *caritas*, "the Love that moves the sun and all the stars," broke through over and over again.

A number of critics have pointed out that of all Maritain's books no doubt the most seminal, like a pebble plunked in a quiet pool and rippling outwards in ever-expanding circles, is his tiny *Existence and the Existent*. This "Essay on Christian Existentialism," a difficult and dense but immensely pregnant book, lies at the heart of his work. Its brief 142 pages were penned in Rome from January through April of 1947, as much of Europe still lay in the ruins of war and as the terribly disappointing Cold War of the subsequent era was just beginning. Its five compact chapters, it is safe to predict, will echo in the world's thinking for generations to come. Indeed, their full meaning is likely to become more apparent in the future than at the time of the book's first appearance, as thinkers from other world traditions engage its arguments.

I would not suggest that there are no faults or limits in Maritain's achievement. Concerned as much as he was for the poor (or, as he usually expressed it in the vulgar Marxism current at the time, the "workers"), it is surprising how little sustained attention Maritain gave to the most significant new discipline of post-medieval times, political economy, with the accent on *economy*. Maritain came to the problems of politics and society rather late in his reflections and then, having achieved much, never took

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up a study of the great economic classics, especially those of the Austrian and Anglo-American worlds. Further, much as he admired the United States—a civilization, he felt, full of reverberations of the realities to which he was trying to point in *Integral Humanism*—Maritain never fully grappled with such classics of American political economy as *The Federalist*, his fellow Frenchman Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, or the writings of Abraham Lincoln.

On the whole, Maritain wrote a beautiful prose, a prose that reaches the heart and the imagination more than that of most philosophers, even while manifesting a Thomist love of exquisite clarity, particularly in the making of distinctions. To read him on any subject is to be forced to look, through such distinctions, from many angles of vision at once. And all for the sake of unity: "To distinguish in order to unite" was a most suitable motto for his life's work. He had a passion for clear and precise ideas, distinguished sharply from their nearest neighbors, as well as for the relations that tie each idea to every other. Sometimes, indeed, he tried to capture too much at once, piling up within a single sentence distinctions within distinctions or introducing an analogous aside, all the while trying to encapsulate an entire argument. Many of his sentences require rereading. But the effort is almost always worthwhile, for Maritain's true conversation partners were less his contemporary critics than the classics, whose intricate treasures he did not wish to muffle, encrust, or belittle by oversimplification.

I

In the autumn of 1960, in one of my first conversations with a full professor in Harvard's philosophy department, a teacher of metaphysics and ethics who confessed cheerily that he deeply admired Hume's happy atheism mentioned how nonetheless deeply impressed he had been with Jacques Maritain during the latter's presence on campus. "He was perhaps the most saintly philosopher I have ever known," he said, "gentle, kind, honest, almost childlike. Of course, I didn't agree with a single position he took. But I did come to admire him a great deal." This was meant to be a warning to me, of course; I, also a Catholic, should not expect an easy time at Harvard. Yet it was also meant as a token of esteem for a significant tradition and a remarkable thinker: no small tribute considering its source.

That professor's tribute to Maritain's saintliness, his gentleness, his childlike manner has remained with me, especially the unusual word (for Harvard), "childlike." This is, I think, the key to Maritain's intuition of being, a way of seeing in which so many other philosophers simply could not follow him. Maritain approached each day with a certain wonder—at the color of the sky, the scent of the grass, the feel of the breeze. He marveled that such a world could have come to be. There was, he understood, no necessity in its coming to be. It had happened. Here it was. He could sense it, his every sensible organ alive to its active solicitations of color, sound, scent, taste, and feel. More than that, his intellect would wonder at it, knowing that it did not have to be as it was on that particular day, or on any other day. And it could also cease to be.

Well before the cloudburst of the first atomic bomb, long before a perceived "ecological crisis," Maritain perceived the fragility of life on earth—not only in his personal mortality, nor even in the fragility of planet earth. Rather, Maritain sensed, in the obscure way of the human intellect at its most childlike and most profound, that all changeable created things—all things short of an Existent necessarily and fully existing in Itself—are fragile and dependent.

My professors at Harvard found this intuition difficult to grasp or, rather, even at the edge of comprehension, profoundly resisted it. I remember a seminar on the Existence of God taught by Professor Rogers Albritton, a student of Wittgenstein who imported many of Wittgenstein's legendary mannerisms into our classroom. Professor Albritton was diagramming on the blackboard Aquinas' Way to the Existence of God from Contingency and Necessity. The good professor, an honest man as far as he could go, kept pointing to the major and minor premises, one after the other, and then confessed that he could find no notion of "necessity" that made the argument flow into Aquinas' conclusion. He tried to supply all the definitions of "necessity" known to him. None would work. I remember summoning up my courage and raising my hand. It was about twenty minutes before class was to adjourn.

Nervously, I reminded him (Professor Albritton also taught Aristotle) that, based upon a rudimentary (and now recognized to be false) empirical observation, Aristotle and Aquinas thought that the stars in the firmament were unchangeable, permanent, and, thus in a special sense, "necessary beings," different from all other changeable substances they had observed. Suppose, I hesitantly said, this gave them a warrant for speaking empirically of "necessary beings." And suppose, further, that they postulated still other necessary beings, in a different class, not composed of material properties at all, yet nonetheless not contingent, not changeable, but beings-in-themselves, which, once existing, never ceased to exist. Suppose, further, that such necessary beings could cause the coming into existence of the contingent beings of whose existence we had no doubt. All these suppositions might be false, I remember saying. Still, if Aristotle and Aquinas held them (and clearly the texts make plain that they did), then, looking again at the premises on the board, doesn't the conclusion suddenly flow? Professor Albritton rubbed his chin

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Wittgenstein-style and looked again at the board. "Hmmm," he said. "Good point." He looked at his watch. "Well, let's think about that until next time." The class adjourned early. We never went back to the Argument from Contingency.

Young as I was, I had no illusions that suddenly Harvard would reach the conclusion that, indeed, mysterious and terrifying as it may be, there is (or even could be) a necessary Existent that explains how this fragile world of change and contingency could come to be and, perhaps, to perish. No one had any problem contemplating some Big Bang of "happening to come to be" nor, at least in later years, does anyone have severe doubts that, whether with Bang or Whimper, this fragile world of ours could cease to be. The *hard* thing to accept, it seems, is that there is an Existent not doomed to our changeability, on whom our existence depends. (Why should that be so hard, I wondered, since so many millions of human beings have always believed it? Life for Harvard philosophers, it seems, is more difficult than for others.)

A childlike adult, however, aware of no special need to see the world as a Harvard philosopher does, could not help being struck by the marvel that no one denies: that things marvelously *are* and then *are not*. The fragility of all beings that we encounter is all too obvious to the sensitive intellect. This sharp taste of fragile existence is "the intuition of being"—or, to be more precise, since the one word *being* is sometimes used of more than one aspect of reality, "the intuition of existing."

Let us consider for a moment the difference between the existing of things and their essential characteristics. The air outside as I write is a cool, fresh October air, blown in from Canada, whereas yesterday's air, blown in from the Caribbean, was muggy and moist. It is at moments not their *coolness* and their *mugginess* that so much attract my attention as the fact that one is and the other was but is not; and the sure knowledge that the one that today is will also pass away. So it is also with the pen so comfortable now in my fingers; and with this narrow-lined paper on which I write and soon (once the typescript is prepared) to be thrown away; and with my very fingers themselves. All will return to dust. Yet today they gloriously *are*, and the taste of that existing is so keen that it sometimes makes one wish to exult and to break into glories.

I do not wish to confuse this insight into existing with the further inference (although it seems to me almost instantaneous) that I should thank Someone, Something, Some Glory for the good fortune of existing. These are two separate movements of the soul. Yet the most salient one, surely, if only because for us it is the first, is the intuition of the sheer existing of fragile, unnecessary things. (Had I died on the numerous occasions when I am aware of almost having done so, the particular existents mentioned above would never have been; had my parents never given me birth, or their parents them . . . so easily would the world never have experienced these fragile existents.)

Nonetheless, I am emboldened by the recent testimony of my second-favorite atheist humanist, Sidney Hook—Albert Camus still being my first—who just before his death confided to the American Jewish Committee Archives that there were many times in his life, at the height of his powers, that he often felt well up within him the desire to say thanks that things, which might have gone badly, worked out in existence as they had. This barely conscious, intuitive inference seems to me wholly natural. It seems to me also a bit of data about the human intellect that ought never to be lost to the attention of philosophers. Sidney Hook was a supremely honest man, willing to put on the record evidence that went against his own philosophy. True, Hook never understood that bit of data as Maritain did, or accepted the interpretation of human life that went with it, but his experience of the movement of human intellect to utter thanks remains a phenomenon to be explained.

II

It is not my intention, however, to spell out the implications that Maritain derived from his intuition of the existent, not at least in the direction of metaphysics, the philosophy of God, or even Jewish and Christian faith. (Maritain was deeply involved through his wife Raissa in questions of Jewish as well as Christian faith; in fact, he may have done as much as any Christian in our time to lay the intellectual groundwork for a special instinct of fraternity among Christians and Jews.) I would prefer here to carry the intuition of the existent into Maritain's further reflections on politics and society.

For if all of human existence is fragile, even more fragile is human action, above all in the political sphere. Maritain writes in *Existence and the Existent* that the end of practical wisdom is "not to know that which exists but to cause to exist what is not yet." Between the cup and the lip, many a slip. It is easier to intend results in ethical or in political action than to achieve those results. Politics, in a language more favored by Reinhold Niebuhr than by Maritain but by no means in conflict with the latter's, is the realm of the contingent, the ironic, and the tragic.

We might pause here to observe the sharp difference between a Thomist view of politics, such as that of Maritain, and that of classical conservatives such as Russell Kirk. Struck by the contingency and organic relatedness of social institutions, practices, and actions, and dismayed by the utopian ideologies to which so many modern minds are prone, paleoconservatives (as they now style themselves) such as Kirk are opposed to "ideological infatuation" or even to imagining

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social projects for the future at all. Considering the projection of social notions into the future to be signs of the disease of "ideology," such conservatives prefer to let things continue, to move along "organically," to be. They resist "thinking for the future," for fear of contamination by ideology.

Maritain had a significantly different view. For him (as for Thomas Aquinas), practical intellect is aimed by its very nature not at knowing that which already exists, but at causing to exist what is not yet. Practical intellect is oriented toward the future, more precisely, to changing the future, to making the future different, "to cause to exist what does not yet exist." For this reason, Maritain did not hesitate in *Integral Humanism* (1936) to imagine possible futures or to suggest new courses of action that would alter the awful European present in the direction of a better--a more humane, more Christian—proximate future.

Maritain took considerable care not to think in a merely utopian fashion. But he did not hesitate to try to imagine proximate, achievable next steps, which might in turn lead to yet further achievable steps, toward building up a more humane and more Christian civilization than the world had yet known. In brief, Maritain shared with those who are currently known as neoconservatives a willingness to project a future at once more attractive and more plausible than socialists or others could imagine, a future thoroughly realizable within the bounds of proximate probable developments. Unlike Kirk, Maritain was not willing to embrace social *laissez-faire* in the political realm, and he was resolutely opposed to mere nostalgia about some supposedly more humane premodern era. Maritain claimed the future. Indeed, insofar as the Christian Democratic parties of Sturzo, de Gasperi, Schuman, and Adenauer drew crucial inspiration from his work, Maritain may be said to have in fact caused to exist much that had not existed before him.

In this sense, Aquinas is properly called the "first Whig" because his ethics and his politics did lay claims upon the future, did inspire, down the ages, a search for political institutions worthy of the rational, consensual dignity of humans. This is the sense in which Maritain was able in *Christianity and Democracy*, *Man and the State*, and other works to claim for a specific idea of democracy the support of the main spine of the Christian intellectual tradition. For this tradition nourished over the centuries the slow emergence of the ideal of a civilized politics, a politics of civil conversation, of noncoercion, of the consent of the governed, of pluralism, of religious liberty, of respect for the inalienable dignity of every human person, of voluntary cooperation in pursuit of the common good, and of checks and balances against the wayward tendencies of sinful men and women. As we shall see presently, Maritain did not claim too much for the historical efficacy of the Christian intellectual tradition; he chastised its failures severely and gave credit to nonbelievers for crucial advances. But neither did he wish to claim too little.

Here it is necessary to see how profound was Maritain's understanding of the hold that the ideal of *caritas* had upon the political thinking of Thomas Aquinas. Maritain held that action in the world—whether ethical action among individuals or political action among systems, institutions, and groups—is always action among *existents*, among real sinners and saints and all those in between, not among purely "rational agents." For him, realistic thinking about ethics and politics could not be conducted wholly within the boundaries of philosophy; theology was necessarily required.

Why? Because ethics and politics are about the real, existing world, and in this existing world humans are not purely rational agents but, rather, fallen creatures redeemed by grace on the condition that they are willing to accept God's action within them. To proceed in purely philosophical categories about ethics and politics would be utopian; one must deal with real, existing creatures locked in the actual historical drama of sin and grace.

That is why, in explicating "the fundamentally existential character of Thomist ethics," Maritain stresses two points, one regarding charity, the other regarding practical wisdom or prudence. Concerning the first, he writes:

> St. Thomas teaches that perfection consists in charity, and that each of us is bound to tend towards the perfection of love according to his condition and in so far as it is in his power. All morality thus hangs upon that which is most existential in the world. For love (this is another Thomist theme) does not deal with possibles or pure essences, it deals with existents. We do not love possibles, we love that which exists or is destined to exist.

Regarding practical wisdom, Maritain makes two extremely subtle points whose fullness I will not be able to reproduce. The first is that, at the heart of concrete existence, when an actual person is confronted with a set of particulars among which to decide to act, that person's appetite—that person's will or secret and deepest loves—enters into the quality of his or her perception of alternatives. More than that, for Aquinas, the rectitude of an existing person's intellect depends upon the rectitude of his existing loves. This is a powerfully realistic doctrine. Intellect follows love, and if the love is errant so also will be the judgment of practical intellect or "conscience." Although, for Maritain as for Aquinas, practical intellect still exerts a major discipline over the soul (over its loves, for example), nonetheless, *here and now*, under the immediate pressures of choice, the predispositions of one's loves are highly likely to bend the intellect to

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their purposes. (Were not David Hume and Adam Smith, under different background assumptions but with the same Augustinian sense for real experience, to make an analogous point?)

Hence, for Aquinas, there is necessary in one's ethical formation in advance of such choices a deep and profound habit of disciplining and directing one's loves, seducing them so to speak, so that in every case they will love the good, the true, and the just, and be habituated to being restless with anything less. Absent a right will, a right practical intelligence will also be absent. In doing what they think is best, those whose loves are disordered will distort even their own intellects. As they love, so will they perceive. "Love is blind," we say, meaning that, disordered, it is more powerful than light, obscures the light, and darkens the eye of intelligence itself.

The second subtle point that Maritain makes about practical intellect begins again with the fact that ethical and political action are always about existents. This time he points out that such action always faces two wholly singular, unrepeatable realities: first, the singular character, here and now, of this particular agent; and, second, the singular, never-to-be-repeated circumstances of the here and now. For these reasons, practical wisdom is utterly different from science. Whereas scientific judgment depends upon regularities, moral judgment must cope with singulars. "The same moral case never appears twice in the world. To speak absolutely strictly, precedent does not exist." Practical wisdom concerns unprecedented singulars ("Useless to thumb through the dictionary of cases of conscience!"). At the same time, however, its point is "not to know that which exists, but to cause that to exist which is not yet," and so it is moved by the appetite of will or love that thrusts us toward creating something new, whether of evil or of good.

III

From this discussion of the sheer existing of ethical and political action—here and now, singular, unprecedented, unrepeatable—it follows that building a humane, Christian society is an uncertain business. It cannot be built upon any institutional framework at all; it has preconditions; many things can go wrong. Thus, to be faithful to the full measure of Christian intellectual conviction about the dignity (and fallibility) of the human person, about civilization as a state of society characterized by uncoerced decisions arrived at through civil discourse, and about the pull upon human love of God's own command of love, new forms of social institutions will have to be labored towards in history, and not without setbacks. For reasons Maritain articulates at some length, a certain kind of democracy, guarded against the diseases to which "pure" democracies are prey, best represents the full flowering of human practical wisdom about the sorts of institutions worthy of Jewish and Christian thought. This particular kind of democratic reality gives the broken world some hope for a better future.

Maritain is not unsophisticated about democracy. He knows, writing in 1944 in the depths of destruction, that "the very name democracy has a different ring in America and in Europe." And before proceeding very far on this subject in *Christianity and Democracy*, Maritain makes three important distinctions, each of which he discusses at more length than we can here duplicate. "First, the word democracy, as used by modern peoples, has a wider meaning than in the classical treatises on the science of government. It designates first and foremost a general philosophy of human and political life." Its inner dynamism, although consistent with a monarchic regime and even other classic "regimes" or "forms of government," leads "in the words of Abraham Lincoln," to "government of the people, by the people, for the people." Democratic regimes are not the only good regimes, but all good regimes will have to embody the dynamism of respect for free persons and their consent.

Second, Maritain argues that democracy after the war will certainly have to be ordered democracy, based on constitutions that have at least three characteristics: formation through the consent of the governed; protection of "the essential bases of common life, respect for human dignity and the rights of the person"; and grounding in a "long process of education." This long process of education will be necessary to lead peoples away from habits of dictatorship, nationalistic impulses, and the mental sloth of unfree and coercively minded peoples. It will have to lead them towards the "slow and difficult construction" of new habits in the temporal life of nations, supportive of "the soul of democracy," that is, "the law of brotherly love and the spiritual dignity of the person."

By these first two distinctions, Maritain shows that he intends what in the United States we mean by a democratic republic, protective of the rights of the person. He means no totalitarian or merely majoritarian democracy, but limited government, grounded in a tradition of sound habits, associations, and institutions. Moreover, he means a set of principles not exhausted by any one form of regime, and yet capable of distinguishing false from true ideas of democracy.

Then, by his third distinction, Maritain makes clear both that Christian faith cannot be made subservient to democracy as a philosophy of life and that democracy cannot claim to be the only form of regime demanded by Christian belief. He intends "by no means to pretend that Christianity is linked to democracy and that a Christian faith compels every Christian to be a democrat." To so argue would be to mix the things of Caesar and the things of God. Nonetheless, Maritain does affirm "that democracy is linked to Christianity and that the democratic impulse

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has arisen in human history as a temporal manifestation of the inspiration of the Gospel."

Maritain does not believe that Christianity exists in the world solely as the Church or the body of believers. Rather, he sees Christianity "as historical energy at work in the world. It is not in the heights of theology, it is in the depths of the secular conscience and secular existence that Christianity works in this fashion." Maritain is equally far from asserting that Christians brought modern democratic institutions into existence: "It was not given to believers in Catholic dogma but to rationalists to proclaim in France the rights of man and of the citizen, to Puritans to strike the last blow at slavery in America." He knows full well the many non-Christian sources of the democratic impulse: "Neither Locke nor Jean-Jacques Rousseau nor the Encyclopedists can pass as thinkers faithful to the integrity of the Christian trust."

Once again, Maritain is interested in existents, not essences. In the existing world of 1944, "The chances of religion, conscience, and civilization coincide with those of freedom; freedom's chances coincide with those of the evangelical message." The terrors of war have obliged the democracies to rethink their spiritual foundations so as to recover their spiritual energies and humanizing mission. They dare not go back to what they were before. The demands of the human spirit for the time include authentic understandings, many of them rooted in the Gospels and in the deepest Christian intellectual traditions, about the nature of human existents. But these have not always been best expressed, or best developed in practical life, by believers.

It is clear that Maritain considers the Christian message about the cry of the poor for justice to be a motor of human temporal improvement. He holds simultaneously that existing democratic ideas, traditions, and institutions were often championed in actual history by those who were non-Christians or even anti-Christian; and yet that, in building better than they knew, such persons were often generating in human temporal life constructs whose foundations were not only consistent with Jewish and Christian convictions about the realities of ethical and political life, but in a sense dependent on them. Pull out from under democratic principles the beliefs of Judaism and Christianity about the transcendent dignity of the person and the human propensity to sin, and the existing edifice of democratic thought is exposed to radical doubt.

Thus, Maritain argued, existing democratic institutions need to be grounded on a deeper, sounder foundation of intellectual conviction and moral habits than had been achieved in previous history. He urged Christians to take up this work both in intellect and in active practice. He saw a great deal to be done, both intellectually and morally, in the "slow and difficult construction" of a more humane world, whether considered from a Christian or a humanistic viewpoint.

IV

I have said enough, I hope, to show why so many of us feel so immensely indebted to this layman, perhaps the greatest exemplar of the Catholic laity in the last two centuries—a master of many wisdoms, a metaphysician, a philosopher at once humane and Christian, an ethicist and philosopher of history, a political philosopher, a saintly and childlike man.

Jacques Maritain, we salute you. And with the thanks that Sidney Hook often felt the impulse to utter, we thank the Creator of all existents for your brief presence among us. May you and Sidney, and all the just and righteous philosophers, enjoy that endless pursuit of Truth, face to face, that you conducted so lovingly on this fragile earth. FT

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The Lives of the Saints and the Pursuit of Virtue

Robert L. Wilken

Of the several paths that lead to virtue, the broadest and the most promising is the way of imitation. By observing the lives of holy men and women and imitating their deeds we become virtuous. Before we can become doers we first must be spectators. Origen, the fecund Christian teacher from ancient Alexandria, said, "Genuine transformation of life comes from reading the ancient Scriptures, learning who the just men and women were and *imitating* them." He shrewdly notes the reverse of this lesson: we can also grow in virtue by "learning who were reproved and guarding against falling under the same censure."

In a scene in *The Brothers Karamazov* shortly before Father Zossima's death, the aged monk gathers his fellow monks and friends in his cell for a final conversation. He recalls that as a child he owned a book with beautiful pictures entitled *A Hundred and Four Stories from the Old and New Testaments.* From this book he learned to read, and as an old man he has retained it on his shelf. Fr. Zossima remembers its many stories of good and holy men and women, stories of Job and Esther and Jonah, the parables of Jesus, the conversion of Saul, and lives of the saints Alexei and Mary of Egypt, stories that planted a tiny mysterious seed in his heart. Some of these "sacred tales," like the story of Job, he could not read "without tears." Like a bright spark amidst darkness, or a seed that never dies, they lodged indelibly in his memory. In these stories of God's people, says Fr. Zossima, he "beheld God's glory." "What is Christ's word," he asks, "without an example?"

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Without examples, without imitation, there can be no human life or civilization, no art or culture, no virtue or holiness. The elementary activities of fashioning a clay pot or constructing a cabinet, learning to speak or sculpting a statue, have their beginning in the imitation of what others do. This truth is as old as humankind, but in the West it was the Greeks who helped us understand its place in the moral life. And in classical antiquity it is nowhere displayed with greater art than in Plutarch's *Lives.*

"Our senses," writes Plutarch, "apprehend the things they encounter simply because of the impact they make upon us. For this reason the sense must receive everything that presents itself whether it be useful or useless. The mind, however, has the power to turn itself away if it wishes, and readily fasten on what seems best. It is proper, then, that it pursue what is best, so that it may not only behold it but also be nourished by beholding it. . . . Our spiritual vision must be applied to such objects that by their charm invite it to attain its proper good."

"Such objects," continues Plutarch, "are to be found in *virtuous deeds;* for these implant in those who search them out a zeal and yearning that leads to imitation. In other cases, admiration of the deed does not at once lead to an impulse to do it. Indeed, in many cases the contrary is true. We take delight in what is produced, but have no desire to imitate the one who produced it." We may take pleasure in, for example, the product of a carpenter or factory worker without wanting to be like them. Their actions generate no "ardor in the breast to imitate" their labor, "nor any buoyancy in the soul that arouses zealous impulses to do likewise. But virtue (*arete*) disposes a person so that as soon as one admires the works of virtue one strives to emulate those who performed them. The

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good things of fortune we love to possess and enjoy, those of virtues we love to perform. . . . The good creates a stir of activity towards itself and implants at once in the spectator an impulse toward action."

In writing the lives of noble Greeks and Romans, Plutarch gave literary form to ideas and conceptions that reached back into Greek antiquity and that continued to exercise their spell over moralists in the early empire. The idea of acquiring virtue by imitating noble examples was a simple yet profound truth, acknowledged by all, even those who chose another vehicle for moral formation. Plutarch's contemporary Seneca, a Stoic philosopher (Plutarch was an eclectic Platonist), wrote letters and moral essays. In one of many letters to Lucilius, a youth he hoped to mold, Seneca wrote: "Plato, Aristotle, and the whole throng of sages . . . derived more benefit from the *character* than from the words of Socrates. The way is long if one follows precepts, but short and accommodating if one imitates examples."

Long before Plutarch and Seneca, Aristotle had shown that the pursuit of virtue was indissolubly bound to deeds, that good actions are not simply the *end* toward which one strives, but the *means* to reach the goal. It is only through the repeated performance of good deeds that a virtuous life is possible. In Aristotle's famous formulation: "We become just by doing just acts, temperate by doing temperate acts, brave by doing brave acts." From this conception it was only a short step to the idea that character could be deduced from actions; hence a narrative (selective, to be sure) of a person's actions (i.e., a life, *bios* in Greek) was an appropriate instrument for engendering virtue. The philosophical grounding for the writing of lives rested on this intimate bond between "deeds" (*praxeis*) and character (*ethos*). And, as Plutarch recognized, deeds need not mean great and noble displays of bravery or courage. "A slight thing, like a phrase or a jest," he wrote, often revealed more of character than "battles where thousands fall." For character had to do with constancy and steadiness.

By the time Christianity made its appearance in the Roman Empire, the practice of writing lives was well established. Yet Christian hagiography, if we wish to use the later term, does not emerge until the end of the third century and does not burst into luxurious bloom until the fifth. There are of course "tales" of heroic men and women in the apocryphal acts of the apostles (as well as in the canonical Acts), and the early acts of the martyrs narrate the "deeds" of a martyr's final hours or days. And most important of all, there was the life par excellence, the life of Jesus, displayed with subtlety of perception and refinement of feeling in the gospels.

The initial impression one receives from early Christian literature, however, is that the preferred vehicle of moral instruction was the *precept*. In the earliest Christian writing (1 Thessalonians, for example), Paul says: "You know what *precepts* we gave you through the Lord Jesus. For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from unchastity; that each one of you know how to take a wife for himself . . . that no man transgress and wrong his brother in this matter. . . ." Sprinkled throughout the New Testament are other lists of precepts, some simple imperatives to refrain from "anger, wrath, malice, slander, foul talk" (Colossians 3:8), others graceful and polished aphorisms constructed on the model of the book of Proverbs or the Wisdom of Sirach—"Let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger. . . . If anyone thinks he is religious, and does not bridle his tongue but deceives his heart, this man's religion is vain" (James 1:19, 26).

Often the precepts stand alone, but in places they are buttressed by examples: Job as an example of "steadfastness" (James 5:11), Abraham the model of faith (Hebrews 11:8), Elijah as evidence of the power of the prayer of the righteous (James 5:17). In the gospels, Jesus conscripts living persons as examples: a certain poor widow who offered a farthing, little children, Mary of Bethany, the centurion whose slave was at the point of death; and, of course, he tells stories and parables, sometimes ending with the words: "Go thou and do likewise" (Luke 10:37). From the beginning, the idea of imitation informed Christian moral discourse. Paul entreated the Corinthians to take himself as an example: "I urge you, then, be imitators of me" (1 Cor. 4:16). Long before the advent of Christianity, the principle was endorsed by Jews, in, for example, the roll call of heroes in the section "let us now praise famous men" in the Wisdom of Sirach. In Christianity, the book of Hebrews unfolds a roster of men and women of faith in chapter eleven—Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Sarah, Moses, Rahab, Gideon—and 1 Clement produces another list.

Examples, however, are not lives. In the case of the biblical heroes, holy men and women tended to function more as "types," i.e., instances of particular virtues, rather than as comprehensive models. In Ambrose's classical work on Christian ethics, *de officiis*, Abraham illustrated prudence, Susanna modesty, David courage, Job patience. Stripped of the grainy texture of place and time, the saints of the distant past became pallid and lackluster, mobilized too often for too many different purposes. As graphic as their deeds might once have been, repeated appeal to the same figures divested them of the very features that had made them noteworthy, severing the emotional bond between doer and spectator.

Why, then, no lives? The most obvious reason was that the gospels stood in the way. The supreme model for Christian life was Jesus. "I have given you an example that you also should do as I have done" (John 13:15). Even those whose exploits would have been fit subjects for a life, most notably Peter and Paul

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(an idea the author of Acts no doubt contemplated, and in part executed), looked to Jesus. "Be imitators of me," wrote Paul, "as I am of Christ" (1 Cor. 11:1). Others followed in this wake. Ignatius of Antioch exhorted the Philadelphians "to imitate Jesus Christ as he imitated the Father." Jesus' call to discipleship, "Follow me" (Mark 1:16), was an imperative to model one's life on his, as Clement of Alexandria put it at the end of the second century. "Our tutor Jesus exemplifies the true life and trains the one who is in Christ. . . . He gives commands and embodies the commands that we might be able to accomplish them."

The very existence of the gospels served as a deterrent to the writing of lives of other holy persons. In them was to be found the noblest example of all. At this early stage of Christian history, it would have been presumptuous to bring other persons into competition with the primal model. Only after Nicaea (325 A.D.) did the need arise for other exemplars. It should be remembered that the most potent arrows in the quiver of the Arians were those passages in the gospels that spoke of Jesus' human features, his limited knowledge, his obedience to God, his growth in wisdom, his suffering. Once it was declared that the Logos was "of one substance with the Father" (a doctrine defended chiefly by appeal to the Gospel of John), a vacuum was created that could be filled with other human faces.

Whatever the historical explanation for the rise of Christian hagiography, there can be no question that by the early fourth century Christians began to discover within their midst the human and spiritual resources to embark on a new strategy for teaching virtue. The first intimations of a new way are visible in the relations forged between master and disciple within the Christian community in the second and third centuries. In the ancient world, moral education was private and individual, based on a master-disciple relation that was nurtured through bonds of friendship, respect, and admiration. As Peter Brown has noted, "No student ever went, as we do, to a university conceived of as an impersonal institution of learning. . . . He would always have gone to a person—to Libanius, to Origen, to Proclus." When Gregory the wonderworker came to Caesarea to study with Origen, he wanted, in his words, "to have fellowship with this man," and through him to be transformed. By establishing an intimate personal bond with Gregory, Origen awakened in him the desire for a new life. The cement of this union was "love," and Gregory says that it was only when he was "smitten" by Origen's love that he was persuaded to give up "those objects that stood in the way of practicing the virtuous life." What goaded the disciple to change was not exhortation but deeds. "He exhorted us by his actions and incited us more by what he did than by what he said."

Gregory did not write a life of Origen, but his "appreciation" of Origen provides a bridge to the first Christian lives. About the same time that Gregory wrote his essay, Pontus, a disciple of Cyprian, composed what may be considered the first Christian "saint's life." His *Passio et Vita Cypriani*, written shortly after Cyprian's death as a martyr (ca. 259 A.D.), was the work of a man who had served as deacon under the great bishop and knew him well. A more conventional disciple would have written Cyprian's final days in the style of other "acts of the martyrs," a popular literary genre among Christians in North Africa and elsewhere. Here was a proven form to celebrate the deeds of a holy person in bright and colorful detail. Pontus, however, consciously breaks with this tradition. Cyprian, he says, "had much to teach, *independently* of his martyrdom; what he did *while* he lived should not be hidden from the world." His purpose in writing the *Vita*, he says, was to hold up the "lofty pattern" (*documentum*) that was displayed in the "actions" and "accomplishments" of Cyprian's entire life, not only his courage at the time of his martyrdom. These deeds, too, were worthy of preservation in "eternal memory."

Although Pontus eschewed the convention of depicting only the final feats of his hero, in one significant respect he stands within the earlier tradition: he wrote about someone he knew at first hand, not about a hero from the distant past. His life told of a man he loved and admired and who had shaped his own character and life. The *Vita Cypriani* summons forth the memories of those who had known Cyprian for years, those who had lived and worked with him, as well as those who had been spectators of his final testimony, his martyrdom.

To a certain extent, Pontus' *Vita* was premature. It would be a hundred years before Athanasius would write the *Life of Antony*. The *Vita Cypriani*, however, locates a path for us between Christian ethical teaching in the second and third centuries and the works of the fourth and fifth centuries, the great age of Christian hagiography. It foreshadows a development that would alter the face of Christian literature and piety. For with the publication and rapid dissemination of the *Life of Antony*, a new era begins. Even a partial list of the many works that appeared during the next three hundred years testifies to the vitality and breadth of this tradition in the generations after the *Life of Antony*: *Life of Pachomius*, Palladius' *Life of John Chrysostom*, Gerontius' *Life of Melania* (first full life of a woman ascetic), John Rufus' *Life of Peter the Iberian*, Theodoret of Cyrus' *Religious History*, Cyril of Scythopolis' lives of Palestinian monks, Sulpicius Severus' *Life of Martin of Tours*, the *Lives of the Eastern Saints* written by John of Ephesus.

Now these works are many and varied. Some are written in an elegant and refined style, self-consciously contraposing Christian saints to the heroes of Greek and Latin antiquity; others are homespun and unaffected tales, ignorant or disdainful of the conventions of the literary culture. Some works dwell on the

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eccentric and grotesque, telling of men who sat for years on pillars or who dwelled in huts too narrow to stretch out in; some read like romances and adventure stories; some depict fierce inner struggles; others describe unexceptional acts of mercy or almsgiving. Some are frankly apologetic, using the life of the saint to defend a particular theological position (for example, the christological formulas of Chalcedon).

With few exceptions, two features characterize these lives. First, they hold up "imitation" as the path to virtue. In the *Life of Antony*, Athanasius writes: "Simply by seeing Antony's conduct, many desired to become imitators." Or Theodoret of Cyrus, in the preface to his *Religious History* (of the holy men and women of Syria): "I am writing down these lives so that others may imitate them." The proper subject of the lives was "deeds" not sayings (though they include sayings), i.e., actions that could be emulated or at least admired and venerated. In a letter placed at the beginning of his *Lausiac History*, Palladius wrote: "Words and syllables do not constitute teaching. . . . Teaching consists of virtuous acts of conduct. . . . This is how Jesus taught. . . . He did not use fine language . . . he required the formation of character." As to be expected in works that focus on actions, the lives prize "seeing" over "hearing." The saints were "living icons." A constant refrain is that the author writes of what he has "seen with his own eyes."

It was only by seeing that one could take the measure of a person's character and remember what one learned; only thus have the saint's character imprinted on one's mind and soul. As John of Lycopolis wrote, "We have come to you from Jerusalem for the good of our souls, so that what we have heard with our ears we might perceive with our eyes—for the ears are naturally less reliable than the eyes—and because very often forgetfulness follows what we heard, whereas the memory of what we have seen is not easily erased but remains imprinted on our minds like a picture." As Plutarch recognized, it was sight, visual images formed in the imagination, that had the power to excite in people the desire for emulation.

Second, the subjects of the lives were men and women the authors knew or about whom reliable information was available from people who had known them. "I write," says Theodoret, about "the glorious saints of our *own* time and the recent past." The lives bear the hues and colors of the communities which produced them. Theodoret calls one of the saints from Cyrus the "fruit of Cyrus." The protagonists in the lives are not figures from the past, heroes sanitized by tradition, but gnarly contemporaries. The lives were written as a hedge against forgetfulness of what had taken place in one's midst and in one's "own time." Nor are these tales of kings and generals; seldom do they even depict clergy. Most of the heroes are laymen and laywomen. Indeed, one of the stock temptations for the saints is the lure of ordination, an enticement the best always resist. The lives are stories of simple and unassuming men and women who loved God more ardently and served God more zealously than their neighbors and friends. For all their virtues, these were the kinds of persons present in every Christian community.

Of course, the lives include stereotypical scenes—the wounded lion befriended by the gentle monk, the master gathering his disciples in anticipation of his death—and the portraits are often highly idealized. Yet the fabric of these works bears the imprint of the unique personality of the subject more than the marks of traditional literary conventions or the author's conception of what constitutes a virtuous life. The hagiographers do not offer a laundry list of virtues. The individual life, like the living master, generated its own "criterion for evaluation." The hagiographers write about the actual accomplishments of living men and women, about deeds that are remembered and admired and evoked to display the saint's unique character, not to illustrate or exemplify a virtue or set of virtues. They fill the space left vacant by the departure of the master.

Once the deeds of virtuous men and women were set within the framework of a life, in contrast to disembodied examples, the possibilities for moral instruction became more subtle and varied. For one thing, the hagiographer could exploit the passage of time. No one becomes virtuous in a few weeks or months; holiness is only learned gradually, over a long period of time. True virtue requires years, decades, of guidance, discipline, prayer, and acts of charity. When Sabas, the architect of Palestinian monasticism, came to Euthymius in the desert east of Jerusalem, he had already excelled in virtue in his homeland Cappadocia; yet when he asked Euthymius if he could become his disciple, Euthymius said that he was too young (he was eighteen) to adopt the solitary life. Euthymius put him under the care of another monk, Theoctistus, to lead him in the first steps of monastic discipline. Serving first as muleteer, Sabas gradually took on whatever other tasks were required. Only after twelve years, when Sabas had reached the age of thirty, was he given permission to live alone, and then on the condition that he return each week on Saturday and Sunday to the main house. Eventually, he was allowed to become a genuine solitary, but it was not until he was forty-five years old that he was entrusted with the direction of other monks.

As noted, spiritual progress is measured not in weeks or months, but in years, even in decades. Twenty, thirty, even forty years is not an uncommon term of preparation. St. Antony lived by himself for twenty years, "not venturing out and only occasionally being seen by anyone." Only at the end of this time, when his soul had achieved "utter equilibrium," was he

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ready to accept disciples. Dwelling on the passage of time highlights the value of constancy or steadfastness, in Aristotle's vocabulary, "stability" (*bebaiotes*). "Acting in accord with virtue," wrote Aristotle, "must occupy a lifetime. For one swallow does not make spring nor does one fine day summer."

Instead of a single deed, there are repeated deeds. Apollonius, a businessman who renounced the world to live in the Nitrian desert, devoted his life to the task of providing medicine and groceries for the ill. "He could be seen making his round of the monasteries from early morn to the ninth hour, going in door after door to find out if anyone was sick. He used to bring grapes and pomegranates, eggs and cakes such as the sick fancy. . . ." This way of life, reports the hagiographer, he practiced faithfully and without interruption for twenty years.

Not content with appeals to stock examples, the lives make place for the unpredictable and novel. This may involve nothing more than the playful addition of stray detail to the narrative. Thus it is noted of Theodore of Sykeon (who spent most of his time in a cage suspended over the face of a cliff) that he was so swift a runner that on several occasions he outran horses in races as long as three miles. But more often the unexpected is purposeful, designed both to show that the hero is free of the comfortable expectations of society and to enlarge the moral horizon of the reader.

Thus the story in Theodoret's *Religious History* of the desert monk Marcianos, visited by an older monk, Avitos, who lived in another part of the desert. Shortly after Avitos' arrival, Marcianos invites him to share dinner. "Come, my dear friend, let us have fellowship together at the table." But Avitos declines, saying, "I don't think I have ever eaten before evening. I often pass two or three days in succession without taking anything." To which, Marcianos, the younger, replies (not without irony), "On my account change your custom today for my body is weak and I am not able to wait until evening." Still Avitos refuses, and Marcianos is disconsolate: "I am disheartened and my soul is stung because you have expended much effort to come and look at a true ascetic; but instead you are disappointed and behold a tavern keeper and profligate instead of an ascetic." Finally Avitos relents and Marcianos happily concludes, "My dear friend. We both share the same existence and embrace the same way of life, we prefer work to rest, fasting to nourishment, and it is only in the evening that we eat, but we know that love is a much more precious possession than fasting. For the one is the work of divine law, the other of our own power. And it is proper to consider the divine law much more precious than our own." Theodoret says of this story that it shows Marcianos' understanding that there is a time for fasting and a time for Christian fellowship. Marcianos knows how "to distinguish the different parts of virtue, what can step aside for another, and when to give preference to something else because of the circumstances."

In his *Life of Euthymius*, Cyril of Scythopolis records another story with an unexpected ending. Euthymius was a recluse, and his entire life was marked by a quest for complete solitude (*hesychia*). Yet no matter how deep in the desert he withdrew, people followed him. His life is a story of constant flight to different parts of the Judean desert, even to the top of Masada. His was a stern and uncompromising asceticism, whose chief marks were obedience, fasting, mastery of the passions, solitude. Yet when Euthymius, the great solitary, was about to die, those were not the things he spoke of to his disciples.

> My beloved brothers, I go the way of my fathers. If you love me, keep these commandments. Hold fast through everything to sincere love which is the beginning and end of all doing of good and the bond of perfection. Just as it is not possible to eat bread without salt, so it is impossible to practice virtue without love. All virtue is established through love and humility by experience and time and grace. Humility, however, exalts . . . since the one who humbles himself will be exalted. . . . Love is greater than humility.

It is striking that the great ascetic and solitary should at his death speak only of communal virtues, of the bonds of fellowship, of mutual love.

The lives, then, do not present a single ideal of virtue, nor do they offer one paradigm of holiness. They recognize and recommend different ways of pursuing the goal of perfection, focusing less on traditional virtues than on the unique qualities of a particular person. By displaying how a single person can respond to new and varied situations, they implicitly suggest that there is no single standard, no one catalogue of virtues, no one way to serve God.

A story in the *Lausiac History* makes the point. It tells of the two sons of a Spanish merchant. When their father died, they divided the estate, consisting of five thousand coins, clothes, and slaves, and deliberated as to how they should deal with this wealth. Neither wanted to be a merchant. Each wanted to live a holy life, but they disagreed as to what form that should take. So they went their separate ways. Paesius gave everything he had to churches, monasteries, and prisons, learned a trade to provide for his own needs, and devoted himself to a solitary life of prayer. Isaias kept the wealth, built a monastery, took in some brothers, and welcomed the poor, setting three or four tables on Saturday and Sunday. When they died, a dispute arose as to who had chosen the better way. Some claimed Paesius excelled because he had hearkened to the command in the gospel to "sell all you have" and follow Jesus (Luke 18:22); others said that Isaias was the greater because he had served others.

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But Pambo, a wise old monk, declared that "both are equal," and he told of a dream in which he "saw both of them standing in paradise in the presence of God."

Theodoret makes a similar point in his story of Maesymas, a Syriac-speaking peasant with no education. At first, he pursued the solitary life in the desert, but later he came to live in a village. Unlike the other "ascetic stars" in Theodoret's collection of lives, Maesymas did not sit on a pillar, he did not live in the open air, he did not weigh down his body with chains. He simply gave himself to the needs of his fellow villagers: "His doors were always open to passers by." Like the widow of Zarephath who fed Elijah, says Theodoret, his jar of grain and pitcher of oil were always full. Recognizing that Maesymas did not conform to the conventional picture of the ascetic "godly man," Theodoret explained that one could learn from him "that those who choose to live virtuously are harmed not at all by life in towns and villages; for this man and those like him responsible for the service of God have shown that it is possible even for those who go about among many to attain the very summit of the virtues." This was a striking conclusion in an age where the solitary life was considered the zenith of sanctity.

Theodoret may, in fact, have felt that his praise of Maesymas was excessive, because he follows his life with the tale of one of the true ascetics, Acepsimas. "Shutting himself up in a cell, he remained there for sixty years without being seen and without speaking." He received food—lentils soaked in water—by stretching his hand through a small hole in the wall of the cell. "To prevent himself from being exposed to those who wished to see him, the hole was not dug straight through the thickness of the wall, but obliquely, being made in the shape of a curve." So holy was Acepsimus considered to be that when he died, a number of different people tried to seize his body and carry it off to their own villages.

The variations in the lives of the saints suggests that holy people do not conform to a predetermined pattern. The point in common is that the saint, like a plant that bends and twists to receive the sun, follows the course of God, always turning to the light that is the source of life.

Not only do the lives offer the unexpected, saints who do not always conform to stock virtues or conventional patterns, they also put a new figure on the stage, the holy woman. There had always been female models—Sarah, Naomi, Judith, Rahab, Mary, Felicity, Perpetua—but as Christian hagiography matured, more and more women became the subjects of lives and their exploits took on new visibility and significance for Christian piety. As has often been observed, the early Christian monastic movement offered women a way to step free of inherited roles and expectations, and the hagiographers seized the opportunity to tell their stories, many of them as spellbinding as those of their male counterparts. Melania, for example, was a more extreme ascetic than many men. She wished to fast even on Easter, and she slept in sackcloth in a box she had constructed in which she could neither stretch out nor turn over.

What becomes apparent at once in reading the lives of holy women is that they do not cultivate "feminine" virtues. Sylvania, for example, was "erudite and fond of literature" (a kind of patron saint for female seminarians); day and night she read the ancient Christian commentators, three million lines of Origen and two and a half million lines of Gregory, Basil, and others. But her reading did not entice her from virtue. She was liberated from "knowledge falsely so called" and was able to "mount on wings . . . and by good hopes she transformed herself into a spiritual bird and so made the journey to Christ." Another woman, Susan, contended with demons. Once she was visited by a "blessed man, great and God-loving," who lived in the desert nearby. Each observed the other in combat with demons. Susan, however, was "stronger than he. She not only conquered the demons, she had no fear of them. She became firm like adamant and unmovable—so much that the demons would cry out at her, 'This is a woman, but she is stone, and instead of flesh she is iron!'"

So remarkable were the feats of women that the hagiographers criticized the popular view that women's capacity for virtue was inferior to that of men. As Palladius said in the *Lausiac History*: "I must commemorate the courageous women to whom God granted struggles equal to those of men so that no one could plead as an excuse that women are too weak to practice virtue successfully. I have seen a good many of them." Theodoret of Cyrus echoed the idea. "Virtue cannot be separated into male and female. . . . For the difference is one of bodies not of souls. As St. Paul says, 'in Christ Jesus . . . there is neither male nor female.' . . . Women too may be models of the virtuous life."

Some hagiographers allow the reader, however infrequently and fleetingly, to glimpse their hero's shortcomings. The saints are not perfect; they are made, not born. They are impulsive, they backslide, they fall into temptations, they are petty and prideful, they lack self-discipline. John Moschus in *Pratrum Spirituale* tells of Conun, a monk in the Jordan valley charged with the responsibility of baptizing. He found himself embarrassed by stirrings of the flesh whenever he had to baptize women, and he finally decided to leave the monastery. But St. John (the Baptizer) appeared to him and said, "Be patient, I will deliver you from that struggle." But the problems recurred when a beautiful Persian maiden came to be baptized. Conun could not baptize her. He went off by himself for prayer, and again John appeared to him. "Return," he said, "to your monastery and I will deliver you from the struggle." This time Conun replied, "Listen here, I'm not going back. You've often made promises

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to me and not kept them!" St. John then threw him to the ground, pulled up his habit, marked his stomach with three crosses, and told him to take courage and go ahead with the baptism. So Conun returned to the monastery, baptized the maiden, anointed her with oil, and, his hagiographer adds, his body did not move.

The lives, then, do much more than provide a model to imitate. They arouse, judge, inspire, challenge, surprise, amuse, disturb, and excite the reader. The hagiographers do not simply set down a minimalist standard for all to imitate. Indeed, many of the specific things they portray are beyond imitation, at least for ordinary mortals. They point beyond the familiar and prosaic to a higher and more noble vision of the Christian life. One of the most cited biblical texts is Philippians 3:13: "I forget what lies behind and strain forward to what lies ahead." What lay ahead, however, could not be individually specified; the goal was not the same for all. The lives of the saints, in Karl Jasper's words, serve more as "beacons by which to gain an orientation" than as "models to imitate." Not everyone can or will pursue the same path. The criteria for judging virtue and holiness vary.

The lives of the saints do not present us with a new theory of virtue, but a new way of teaching, a new strategy that builds on the tradition of examples, but enriches it by unfolding a pattern of holiness over the course of a lifetime. Precepts are now put in the mouths of familiar persons, and examples are enhanced by seeing them as deeds of specific individuals. The hagiographers, for the first time in Christian history, turn to living persons, or those who have recently died, as models of the virtuous life. There is great boldness here, to choose people from one's midst, to hold up to view peasants and farmers and jugglers and sailors, presenting them as models for their neighbors, fellow citizens, and friends. By displaying men and women from their own time, and often from their own communities, these lives proclaim that holiness is possible, virtue is attainable, perfection is within your grasp. They teach, in Bergson's phrase, a morality of aspiration, not of obligation. By placing before our eyes deeds that provoke, excite, and charm, they set us on a sure path toward holiness. ☐

SCENE FROM A LIVING ROOM

In that house of quiet dying, through still sheers that
turn
the day to gray,
only two chairs of six are sat upon, the bed
no longer shared.

She smiles, a 5 x 10 on the television top,
he laughs, a young man upon the mantle.
But, air unmoving from dining room to kitchen
old woman watches TV alone,
old man breathes slow upon his bed.

Pink and gold, crochet and arches,
tiled fireplace cold,
her vision turns to water in one eye,
his hand shakes too much to sign.
Each black night follows each day's gray.

Camille S. Williams

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Books In Review

Restoring the God of their Fathers

THE EMERGENCE OF JEWISH THEOLOGY IN AMERICA. By ROBERT G. GOLDY. *Indiana University Press. 149 pp. $25.*

Reviewed by **Matthew Berke**

JUDAISM WAS BORN in the Fertile Crescent when a young Semite, deeply troubled by his own sense of incompleteness and guilt, answered God's call, and in so doing started a chosen people that would be "a light unto the nations." From these first obscure revelations and intuitions the descendents of Abraham developed one of the great faiths of the world, based on centuries—indeed millennia—of experience and reflection on the meaning of sin, judgment, and redemption. The record of their dialogue with the One True God is contained in the Hebrew Scriptures (a.k.a. The Old Testament) and is elaborated in a vast body of commentary, law, and tradition.

In the nineteenth century, following the Enlightenment and the emancipation of Jews from their ghettos, the ancient faith of Israel began to adjust itself to the modern world—particularly among Jews in the advanced societies of Western Europe and the United States. By the early and middle part of this century, liberalizing trends came to dominate much of the thought and practice of Reform and Conservative Judaism in America, also gaining some influence in Orthodoxy. A remote deist God—a lofty ideal or metaphor for man's highest aspirations—quietly supplanted the active, personal God of the Torah. Optimism regarding human nature and its perfectibility through science and reason replaced the notion that human dependence and sin were overcome principally through religious study and spiritual discipline.

During and immediately after World War II, however, there was something of a revolt against modernizing tendencies. The revolt was prompted in part by the terrible outbreak of violence in the twentieth century, culminating in Auschwitz and Hiroshima. It was inspired also by certain intellectual trends (mainly in Europe): existentialism; the born-again Judaism of Franz Rosenzweig and Martin Buber; and the Protestant neo-Orthodoxy of Kierkegaard, Barth, Tillich, Brunner, and (in the U.S.) the Niebuhr brothers.

THE CHALLENGE TO liberal hegemony in American Judaism represented not so much an effort to restore the minutiae of ritual observance as an attempt to recover what was seen as the spiritual core of traditional faith: a radical dependence on God, the personal, saving God who intervenes in human affairs, public and private. The "new Jewish theologians" (as they were called) charged that secularism and liberal religion had lost sight of ancient truths, and as a consequence, their teachings denied men the metaphysical security and comfort they needed, leaving them in an anxious and irritated state, readily susceptible to totalitarian political movements and other modern forms of idolatry. Atavistic tribal passions and romantic utopian schemes, however false in the final analysis, at least offered some approximation of the vital spiritual life that had been suppressed and smothered in a culture guided by modern rationalism. According to the new Jewish theologians, the furious violence and demonic fanaticisms of the twentieth century were in large measure traceable to the secularization process; such viciousness dramatically refuted the notion that evil and sin were outmoded categories.

In *The Emergence of Jewish Theology in America,* Robert G. Goldy tells the story of this rebellion against religious liberalism, and, despite certain deficiencies, he tells much of the story quite well. The strongest aspect of the book is Goldy's ability to provide concise summaries of viewpoints and arguments on both the modernist-liberal side and on the "new theology" side. He is a good arbiter of the arguments and he writes with admirable clarity and ease.

The proponents of a "new Jewish theology," it should be noted, did not speak as a group or bloc, outside of and against the whole of Judaism. They were, for the most part, insiders who were pursuing specifically Jewish agendas (not generic theology) within their respective denominations: Joseph Soloveitchik within Orthodoxy, Abraham Joshua Heschel within Conservatism, and Emil Fackenheim within the Reform movement. (Will Herberg, whose thought receives careful attention in Goldy's study, was something of an outsider.) What united these different thinkers sufficiently to describe their activities as a single phenomenon was the attempt to unify the best insights of tradition and modernity: for Fackenheim, Herberg, and Heschel it was to restore the legitimacy of divine command and revelation to Judaism's liberal, highly secularized wing; for Soloveitchik it was to make Orthodox faith credible in modernist terms.

ALL OF THESE thinkers incurred stiff opposition from the established liberals, at least at first. (Soloveitchik, insofar as he confined his mission to the Orthodox, avoided this problem.) In his account of public debates in the forties and fifties, Goldy says that the defenders of liberal, modernized Judaism rarely hazarded serious engagement with the new Jewish theologians, sometimes ignoring them altogether and other times refuting mere caricatures of their thought.

MATTHEW BERKE *is Managing Editor of* FIRST THINGS.

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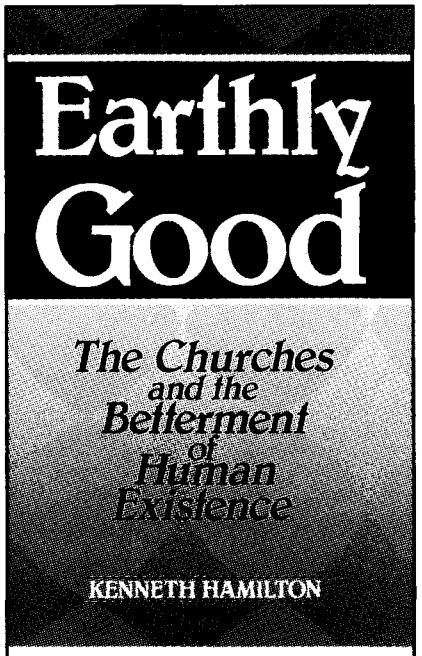
The modernists accused the theologizers of being superstitious, regressive, irrational, anti-humanistic, misanthropic, and mystical. They characterized them as cosmic *kvetches*, morbidly un-Jewish in their outlook, and—the unkindest cut of all—Christian in temperament. On top of all that, some of the theologians were resented for a tendency (according to Goldy) to be overbearing, even arrogant, in their manner of presentation.

The charge of atavistic and regressive supernaturalism was unfair in that it ignored the new theologians' aim of developing a spiritual and intellectual "third way," neither modernist nor medieval, but joining Enlightenment rationalism with traditional insight. Their "existentialism" consisted chiefly in recognizing a depth of sorrow and tragedy in life; and their "irrationality" amounted to the effort to equip believers with a genuinely religious hope beyond the palliatives of reason and therapy. Their stress on human finitude, fragility, and dependence represented a rejection not of the essential Hebrew spirit, but only of distorted liberal interpretations of that spirit. The Jewish theologians justified taking cues from Christian theorists like Reinhold Niebuhr by saying that such thinkers could help direct Jews back toward a truer version of their own faith and tradition. Besides, Fackenheim and others argued, human beings have a common nature, and modern men, Jews and Christians alike, had recently suffered through the same terrible crises. It was only natural to be comparing notes in order (as Heschel put it) "to recover the questions for which the Bible is an answer." Goldy reinforces their case by recalling that Jewish thought has a long tradition of enriching itself through judicious incorporation of elements from other philosophies and faiths.

The problem with liberal Judaism, according to the new theologians, was that it did not merely borrow from, but largely surrendered to, various intellectual systems from the secular world, overlaying a superficial gloss of Judaic symbolism on what was in substance scientific naturalism, German idealism (especially Kant), and American pragmatism (especially Dewey). It was not just a particular theology that the modernists objected to—it was the very idea of theology, of God-talk, of supernatural truth. However, the Judaism they ended up with sometimes seemed less the faith of the fathers than Kant and Dewey in yarmulkes.

GOLDY NOTES THE STRONG protests by the new Jewish theologians on this point. Heschel lamented, "It is possible to be a rabbi [in America] and not believe in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." In 1948, a young Irving Kristol, then an editor at *Commentary*, deplored "the state of mind of a large section of the American rabbinate and much of the American Jewish community in general" as a "perversion of the Jewish religion into a shallow, if sincere, humanitarianism, plus a thorough-going insensitivity to present-day spiritual problems." Emil Fackenheim decried as intellectual dishonesty and blasphemy "the present fashionable combination of disbelief in an existing God with the active perpetuation of a religion as a 'useful' or 'wholesome' illusion." Though "Orthodoxy held fast to the Jewish God," Fackenheim complained, it often "confined His essential activity to a conveniently remote Biblical and Talmudic past. . . ."

While Goldy's book is good in establishing the tone and substance of the relevant arguments, it achieves only mixed success in tracing the effects on the life and thought of the Jewish community at large. He does recognize, and sometimes quotes from, the host of fellow travelers and disciples spawned by the postwar Jewish theological movement; and he mentions the important role of Jewish journals, old and new, in entertaining theological argu-



Why are so many churches today stepping to a worldly drumbeat, telling members how to pursue a "good" life here and now? In this hard-hitting book Kenneth Hamilton maintains that churches everywhere are making the mistake of commending the gospel primarily on the grounds of the personal and social good it can bring about on this earth. He argues that abstract utopian theories and Gnostic ideals have infiltrated and infected the modern church, undermining its effectiveness. Hamilton's critique of the modern church is penetrating, and his analysis of the meaning of *tradition* and *modernity* is clear and thought-provoking.

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ments. At the broader community level he points to the generations of Jewish college students in the 1960s and beyond who sought serious answers to questions of God, faith, and values. He cites the success of Rabbi Harold Kushner's book, *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, as a sign of the permanent influence achieved by debates begun much earlier.

CLEARLY, THE THEOLOGICAL movement of the postwar period succeeded in breaking the near-monopoly of religious liberalism dominating much of the American Jewish community. But it did not achieve anything like the "Copernican revolution" in Jewish piety and practice that it sought. However one studies the matter—whether by casual observation or statistical study—modernist, secular attitudes retain a much stronger hold on Jews than on Christians, among whom traditional religious ideas (belief in an afterlife, a personal God, etc.) are more prevalent. Unaccountably, Goldy remarks, "Almost unknown before 1945, a Jewish theology which was neo-orthodox and existentialist had become by the 1960s the dominant mode of religious thought within the American Jewish community."

On the contrary, it would be fair to say that many literate and intelligent Jewish readers who pick up Goldy's book will be unable to understand from his account the nature of the intellectual conflict that arose forty-five years ago, so alien do the "new" theologians' ideas remain even today. Such readers will find the author less helpful than he might be, since he never really defines key terms such as "existentialism," or even "theology." As a result it's not entirely clear why the modernist rabbis objected to theology as something alien to Judaism, but not to "religious philosophy" or "religious thought." Many readers may want to know more fully how these terms were understood by the different factions in the dispute. They might also profit from a discussion of how what they know as Judaism is largely constituted by the categories of modern creeds and philosophies.

For all these faults, *The Emergence of Jewish Theology* does represent a valuable contribution to the growing literature on Jewish life and faith that has appeared over the last decade or so. Even if the arguments described here were already part of the public record—in various journals and books—Goldy has provided an important service in giving shape to the debates that occurred in the recent past. Indeed, his book (which has an extensive bibliography) may serve as a possible starting point for continuing dialogue about the nature and direction of contemporary Judaism—in its own internal affairs and in American public life. It may even present helpful insight for Christian churches that have experienced similar conflicts between liberal and neo-orthodox factions.

America Through Foreign Eyes

AMERICANS: THE VIEW FROM ABROAD. By JAMES C. SIMMONS. *Crown. 239 pp. $19.95.*

***Reviewed by* K. L. Billingsley**

A ZEALOUS CONVERT once decided to grade his own spiritual progress and under "humility" wrote: "97 percent." The moral of the story is that, on matters of religion, you don't grade yourself; others must do it for you. The same rule applies to nations.

Contemporary American intellectuals, including especially those who speak for the old-line religious establishment, consistently assign the nation a failing moral grade. That position is often said to reflect the majority view toward this country around the world. But is that in fact the case?

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Not according to the contemporary Tocquevilles canvassed by former San Diego State professor of literature James C. Simmons in *Americans: The View From Abroad.* If their views are by no means all favorable, neither are they predominantly disapproving.

The range of attitudes can be seen in the observers' comments on religion and morality in the United States. "Americans have a really low morality, especially the females and teenagers," says Armenian immigrant Lucy Kouyoumdjian, now a resident of Cambridge, Massachusetts. She finds young people "having sex at an early age," which "brings a lot of trouble in the end." She wishes she could help American teenagers understand that sex involves "very serious responsibilities."

While some foreigners see America as a bastion of prudery, a number of others agree that this is a sex-obsessed nation. Many suggest that there has been in recent years a shift from moral restraint to, as one put it, a "complete removal of taboos and restraints."

Japanese professor Saeki Shoichi, who taught for a semester at the University of California, Berkeley, saw in this "upheaval" a "weakening of the society's Christian underpinnings." He got the impression that "a vast chasm yawns within the soul of the American people, a gnawing hunger that, to the outsider, is almost grotesque." Shoichi wondered if the religious impulse suddenly had found itself "without an object." He sees traditional American religious fervor now displaced onto such secular causes as the anti-smoking crusade.

IN A SIMILAR VEIN, English observer Jane Walmsley contends that what distinguishes Americans from Europeans is the apparent American belief "that death is optional." She believes that this explains the national obsession with "health, aerobics, prune juice, plastic surgery, and education."

The book is filled with acute observations on the habits of the

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Americans. One visitor marvels that American parents will make any sacrifice for their children except to stay married to each other. Another is convinced that America doesn't know where it is going but seems determined to "set a speed record getting there."

Most observers, even those who generally dislike the place, continue to see Americans as friendly and generous, if at times naive and immature. An English clergyman complains that American Christians are far too generous with their hugs.

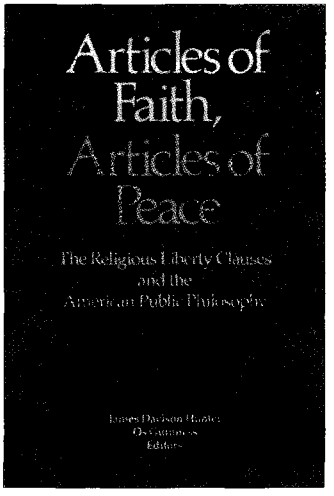
In the realm of economics, a Japanese businessman challenges the belief, popular among conservatives, that American economic decline is largely due to organized labor. "American executives are too aristocratic," he says. "Very few of them have ever worked on a production line themselves and they have little or no contact with their workers, whom they treat as interchangeable parts."

SUCH OBSERVATIONS are not simply set down at random by the author but are helpfully categorized and introduced. The larger sections concern themes such as American culture, the American people, and the nation as a symbol. Smaller sections range over subjects from Disneyland to Gary Hart to U.S. foreign policy. The contributors vary from anonymous scribes and tourists all the way to movie stars and diplomats. Many of the selections delight and instruct at the same time. Russian comedian Yakov Smirnov, for example, is grateful for parades "without missiles."

Simmons includes boilerplate anti-American invective but balances it with foreign criticisms of the genre. British author Paul Johnson notes that attacks on America have been so venomous as to merit the description "witch hunt" and even "racism." Russian novelist Vassily Aksyonov believes that anti-American sentiment is "of such intensity that it can only be called hatred."

Overall, the selections give the impression that foreign views of America are generally favorable. For many, the United States remains a kind of promised land, where talent and energy can find free expression. Even many of those critical of the country seem to prefer to live here.

Anti-Americanism is not of course restricted to foreigners, as reflected in some editorial reluctance toward Simmons' project, a clear winner of an idea that should have been taken up long ago. "Only a patriot," sniffed one publishing executive, could possibly be interested in a collection of views about America. But it is not just "patriots" who understand the value of paying close attention to what others are saying about us.



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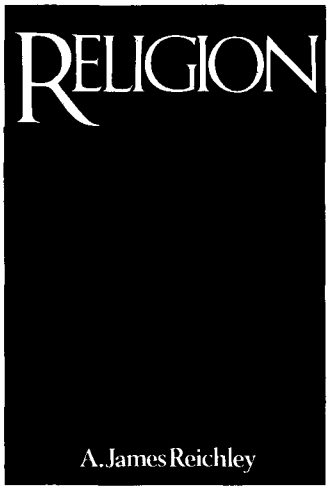

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Abortion Talk

DECODING ABORTION RHETORIC: COMMUNICATING SOCIAL CHANGE. By CELESTE MICHELLE CONDIT. *University of Illinois Press. 236 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by **Guy M. Condon**

STUDENTS OF WESTERN thought have long understood the correlation between public discourse, conviction, and practice. Even as far back as the fifth century B.C. Democritus said, "Word is the shadow of deed."

But less obvious is the impact of words and story on public policy, the drift of statutory and judicial development, as played out in a democratic environment. The late Yale law professor, Robert M. Cover, explained this dynamic as "a system of tension between reality and vision." He wrote that "no set of legal institutions or prescriptions exists apart from the narratives that locate it and give it meaning. For every constitution there is an epic, for each decalogue a scripture."

The dynamic that Professor Cover described has taken particularly significant form in the debate over abortion. For that reason, *Decoding Abortion Rhetoric: Communicating Social Change* has come at a timely moment, helping partisans on either side of the issue to understand how linguistics, imagery, and story affect the way we think, believe, vote, and live.

Celeste Michelle Condit, who teaches speech communication at the University of Georgia, calls rhetoric "the most immediate source for the flow of social meanings." She traces the story lines developed by the right-to-life and right-to-abortion "rhetors" from the early 1960s to the present, explaining the tactics used by each group to control the public debate on the issue. Her analysis embraces public interest pronouncements, television drama, legislation, judicial opinions, and private discourse.

CONDIT PROMISES "not to buttress any particular position," but her failure to include information necessary to put many of her examples and interpretations in a proper context skews her analysis in a prochoice direction. That tendency is emphasized by disproportionate focus on the tactics and failures of the prolife side of the abortion debate.

But it is the author's lack of discussion about the news media—the dominant channel of rhetoric in support of the abortion license—that raises the most serious question about her objectivity. One wonders if Professor Condit recognizes the possibility that even she, a presumably dispassionate student of public communication, might have been swayed by the rhetoric of the abortion debate. But whatever her blind spots, her study effectively highlights the link between public conversation and public policy.

The analysis begins in 1962 with the TV Romper Room host, Sherri Finkbine of Phoenix, who had taken a Thalidomide tranquilizer while pregnant with her fifth child. Once Finkbine learned that her baby might be deformed, she sought not just an abortion, but one that would be legally sanctioned. When she could not secure legal approval, she flew to Sweden to find, as one newspaper put it, "a more civilized attitude toward her plight." The episode of Sherri Finkbine, a woman whose career and private life both indicated a deep love of children, helped shape a prochoice mythology that pitted decent, desperate women against an uncaring legal system that denied them access to necessary abortions.

Condit might have explored the discrepancies between public myth and fact in Finkbine's story, as Marvin Olasky has done in his *Press and Abortion*. She could have mentioned that Finkbine's baby had only a 20 percent chance of being deformed, or that people from around the United States offered to adopt the baby no matter what. And in a study of rhetoric it would have been appropriate to note that in the early stages of the story reporters referred to Finkbine's unborn child as a baby, but over time shifted to the term fetus.

In any case, the Finkbine case marked a major turning point in public attitudes toward abortion. A Gallup poll taken shortly after the incident (which goes unmentioned by the author) indicated that 52 percent of Americans believed that Finkbine had done the right thing. That was the first recorded instance of majority support for a woman seeking an abortion. Though the circumstances had been extreme, the shift was nonetheless significant.

ALTHOUGH HER ACCOUNT is incomplete, Condit provides an orderly description of the phases in abortion discussion over the past thirty years. She shows how Judge John Noonan early on used Judeo-Christian themes of love, sacrifice, and protection of the weak to argue that condemnation of abortion was "an almost absolute value" of Western Civilization. She then notes Lester Kinsolving's counter-argument that the idea of life beginning at conception was a contemporary invention, "denied by three of the Roman Church's most prominent saints and by two of its popes." (The author should in accuracy have noted that the Catholic church has in fact consistently maintained a proscription against abortion since the first century and that it is the argument to the contrary that is a modern invention.)

By the 1960s, pro-abortion language achieved full expression. The various streams supporting it came together in the word "choice," a term that has remained effective up to the present. But Condit overlooks another shift within the theme of choice: from "freedom to choose" to "who will decide." The latter point plays off

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public fears, even among many of those who consider themselves opposed to abortion, of state control of personal matters. This in turn strengthens the rhetorical link between a constitutionally protected right of privacy and a fundamental right to abortion.

The author's analysis of figures of speech, in using examples solely from the prolife side of the debate, reveals a bias of selection. Thus she defines the ideas that "the fetus is *human*" and that "*abortion* is murder" as metaphor, and sees the symbol of the tiny feet of fetuses as synecdoche. Why not, for balance, include the illustration of "abortion is a right" as metaphor, or of "rape-and-incest pregnancy" as synecdoche (a tiny part of the whole class of women using the abortion license)?

Condit's discussion of the dynamic between ideology and rhetoric again uses almost exclusively prolife examples, but prolife advocates seeking a more effective public rhetoric would nonetheless do well to attend to it closely. The author notes that the rhetoric of partisans succeeds insofar as it convinces the general public that particular partisan interests "are in the general interest." Both the actions and the language involved in the Gideon Project abortion clinic bombings in Pensacola, Florida, on Christmas morning, 1984, did just the opposite, and their negative impact continues to this day.

The bombers described their action as being in accord with "God's will" and as "a gift to Jesus on his birthday." Such language reinforced the activists' own ideological commitment, but as Condit notes, "the act of persuading . . . requires activists to abandon their own narrow views of the world, to address the audience in its own terms."

SOME OF THE MORE strident activists of the prolife movement have yet to understand this. Their efforts may well militate against achieving their goal of restoration of the public consensus on protection of the unborn. Even as Molly Yard advances the prolife cause when she affirms China's coercive abortion policies, so Randall Terry advances the pro-abortion cause when he advocates what sounds a lot like theocracy to humanistic and otherwise pluralistic ears. Such behavior serves the opposition's stereotyping of prolifers as religious zealots and extremists, a gang of fanatics led by bullying white males indifferent to the needs and concerns of women.

Terry and other high-profile activists should recognize that the media probably do not have the prolife movement's best interests in mind in choosing them as spokespersons. Condit's discussion of public expression of insular ideology could prove helpful in restructuring the rhetorical strategies of prolife partisans.

Mention of the media returns us to the greatest weakness in Condit's work: its lack of analysis of the crucial role of the press (broadly understood) on the abortion story. Journalists themselves have recognized the pro-abortion bias in news coverage, as in David Shaw's recent comment in the *Los Angeles Times* that "the news media consistently use language and images that frame the entire abortion debate in terms that implicitly favor abortion-rights advocates." John Leo noted similarly in *U.S. News & World Report* "that since so few editors and reporters seem to know anybody who is anti-abortion, abortion protestors have been relatively easy to demonize."

Condit partially compensates for her failure to discuss the news media by her useful exploration of the treatment of abortion in television drama. Such treatment is obviously important. As Condit notes in quoting David Thornburn, "Television is the contemporary medium of 'consensus narrative,' the primary source of 'shared stories' that explain

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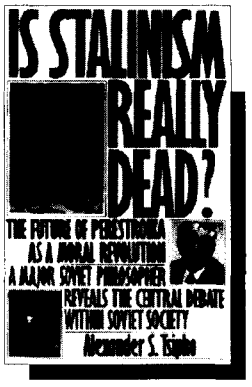

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RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS
Editor-in-Chief

'life as an American.'"

A single television drama can provide a broad range of viewpoints and cultural images on the abortion question. One of Condit's examples is an episode of *Cagney and Lacey*, in which Detective Sergeant Chris Cagney, who is Catholic, protects an indigent Hispanic woman seeking an abortion and tracks down an abortion clinic bomber.

A number of prochoice themes are sounded. Cagney's father urges his daughter to get off the case, because the "big boys" downtown (predominantly Irish Catholic) will not like her involvement in this abortion activity. Similarly, the woman's reasons for wanting an abortion are treated in a highly sympathetic manner. She is poor, she explains to Cagney, and her husband is on disability. "I don't want to be on welfare, I want to finish business school."

BUT A DIALOGUE between Cagney and her partner, Mary Beth Lacey, at least offers some ambiguity on the question. Cagney says of abortion, "I don't know when it's murder." Lacey insists that "abortion is not murder. It's not even a person yet." But Cagney responds: "Tell that to your belly." Condit summarizes the episode as "circumscribing the cultural meaning for the practice of abortion, supporting legal choice as a pragmatic necessity but defining abortion as a morally undesirable act."

The author also compares differences in private and public discourse in terms of justification for abortion decisions, relying on a book called *Pregnant by Mistake*, a collection of interviews with women who have had abortions. For example, the reference to a "mother's life" in public language in defense of abortion has to do with physical survival. In private discourse, that reference is broadened to encompass the whole matter of a woman's identity, the "everything I was" before pregnancy.

Moreover, the "wants" of women as discussed in private discourse may offer acceptable non-public warrants for a decision to abort. But, according to Condit, in the public realm "want" did not seem to offer "a comfortable or successful social defense of abortion." Therefore, the term was transformed in public discourse into a concern over "unwanted children." Condit asserts that it was the Zero Population Growth movement that made it possible to relate "unwanted children" to a greater good offering benefits to "wanted" children and to society at large. In this way "individual wants . . . became social choices."

Since a majority of Americans do not agree that ZPG or personal advancement justify abortion, exposing these discrepancies between public and private meanings could have a favorable impact on the public debate from the prolife perspective.

However, the book's greatest contribution comes in the discussion of how prevailing rhetoric affects not just public opinion but legal and constitutional understanding of the issue as well. Condit points out that "because the law must be able to control the public behavior of government officials and private individuals, legal discourse occurs, necessarily, in public space."

In reference to Justice Harry Blackmun's opinion in *Roe v. Wade*, Condit asserts that "the Court decided that the prochoice vocabulary was constitutionally legitimate. . . . Blackmun repeatedly employed the precise vocabulary from the prochoice discourse, citing a 'fundamental right to choose' and 'freedom to choose.'" The dissenting justices, for their part, "described abortion and motherhood precisely within the characterizations used by the prolife movement," referring to the pregnant woman as a mother and indicating that it was the issue of her survival, not the conduct of her life, that presented an issue of fundamental freedom.

Perhaps most significant here is the Court's assumption of the au-

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thority to decide the question in the first place. According to Condit, "the procedural matter of accepting the case had breathtaking consequences: it allowed women to bring pregnancy (perhaps our single most important issue as women) into the judicial process in a definitive way." This gave an enormous rhetorical advantage to prochoice women, since, as Condit says, "fetuses could not bring such cases" nor shape the public discourse on the issue in the direction of their right to exist.

For partisans and non-partisans alike, *Decoding Abortion Rhetoric* adds much to an understanding of the flow of public language and story in the abortion debate. In the aftermath of the *Webster* decision, with major cracks appearing in the structure of *Roe*, the stress on public consensus has increased dramatically. Each side recognizes the need to build a legislative cathedral, if you will, that shelters either emerging human beings or women's right to abortion.

Within the architecture of democracy, the group that is successful is the group that builds the sturdiest flying buttresses of public and judicial conviction. Leaders on either side who attempt to build their structure without both of the buttresses solidly in place will risk its collapse. In the end, as Condit recognizes, it is rhetoric and its impact on both public conviction and judicial interpretation that will ultimately determine whose structure will stand.

BRIEFLY NOTED

TRAINING GOD'S ARMY: THE AMERICAN BIBLE SCHOOL, 1880-1940. By VIRGINIA LIESON BRERETON. *Indiana University Press. 212 pp. $27.50.*

Few histories of American education include references to the likes of Moody Bible Institute. Ms. Brereton of Harvard argues convincingly that this is a serious oversight. The Bible schools of America play a powerful role in shaping evangelical and fundamentalist religion, of course, but they have also pioneered imaginative changes in educational theory and practice. The author's judicious and sympathetic treatment of this neglected dimension of how Americans learn to think and be and do is most welcome.

THE CATHOLIC CHURCH AND AMERICAN CULTURE. Edited by CASSIAN YUHAUS. *Paulist Press. 115 pp. $8.95 paper.*

The subtitle of these collected essays is "Reciprocity and Challenge." David O'Brien, Margaret Steinfels, John Coleman, Monika Hellwig, and Herve Carrier agree that Catholicism should challenge the putative sins of American culture—consumerism, individualism, militarism, etc. But the writers usually seem so eager to distance themselves from the magisterium of their church that it is hard to see on what distinctively Catholic basis they challenge the culture, aside from vague appeals to the "communal values" of the Catholic tradition. Steinfels, editor of *Commonweal*, offers intriguing insights into how that venerable journal understands its mission today.

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Richard John Neuhaus

The Public Square

A Continuing Survey of Religion and Public Life

Women, Bishops, and King Lear

So you're not an editor? Lucky you. We were just going to press with an issue that included an outstanding article by Father Paul Mankowski, S.J., on the second draft of "One in Christ Jesus: A Pastoral Response to the Concerns of Women for Church and Society." The draft was to be considered by the Catholic bishops in their November meeting in Washington. Great was my colleagues' relief in having put the issue to bed, or so they thought, when the word came that the pastoral on women's concerns had been withdrawn under fire from critics of quite diverse viewpoints. Fr. Mankowski had written in his article that the best thing that could happen is that the draft be withdrawn, so he should be happy enough, despite the killing of his fine article. And our readers should not complain, since it made possible our publishing a month ahead of schedule John Sisk's winsome reflection on the legacy of the French Revolution.

Nonetheless, we did so like the Mankowski article that we are loathe to see it denied public attention altogether. Herewith, then, some highlights. We offer them not only for their intrinsic worth but because women's concerns, as they are called, will undoubtedly come before the bishops again, and because the problems posed by "One in Christ Jesus" illustrate difficulties that all the churches have when it comes to making statements on questions of societal moment.

How Not to "Listen" and "Care"

Mankowski opens with the opening scene of *Lear* in which the king proposes to divide his kingdom among Goneril, Regan, and Cordelia. "Poor, sad, proud, too-tender Lear: the old man who loves to be loved; the prince embarrassed by the scope of his authority, yet jealous of royalty's perquisites; the ruler willing to give away his lawful prerogatives in order to hear—if just for a moment—that sweet gush of feminine gratitude; the vain old duffer whose need for affection makes him oblivious of its counterfeit, whose hunger welcomes a Goneril's flattery and spurns the candor of a Cordelia."

"Lear's counterpart in the contemporary Church," writes Mankowski, "is a certain segment of clergymen which has made it a practice to vindicate its prejudices by affecting to consult with the faithful, to listen to *their* concerns, only to announce with astonishment that God's Little Ones are pleading for precisely those changes for which the Listeners themselves have a deep and discerning sympathy." These are generally men of the 1960s, chosen for their "pastoral abilities." Enamored of political and social concerns, they tend to be "impatient of theology and baffled by the attention paid by a younger generation of churchmen to sources of traditional wisdom." Most of all, they are weary men. "Bone weary, King Lear weary," as Mankowski puts it. They have taken so much, they want a reprieve, they want to be loved. That would seem to be the best way to explain the pastoral's "alarming rhetorical tumbles into crude emotivism." The draft said this, for example: "We feel a sense of urgency to do whatever must be done to show that we take women's concerns seriously. We believe what one woman said: 'The church is a powerful witness in the world. The world will watch how she treats all her children . . . rather than listen to a dusty document.' "

To dismiss the attention due the Church's written instruction as listening to a dusty document, Mankowski writes, "is more the language of a high school manifesto than an episcopal council, and is especially perverse given the purpose and history of the magisterial office." Raw emotivism does not make for good teaching; "caring" covers a multitude of sins, including incoherence. "As in those UNICEF cards that come out at Christmas, glaring and eternal contradictories are to be sunk in the face of a brightly crayoned expression of juvenile *bonhomie*." Or again: The draft "is pointlessly, relentlessly repetitious, and the reader has the curious sensation of being trapped by a lost cab driver trying to bluff

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his way through town, while the same three or four ideological landmarks keep reappearing with no cogency of method or presentation." Father Mankowski, as may by now be apparent, did not like the draft at all.

A Lack of Theological Seriousness

It is not just a matter of not liking it, however. Even if only a small number of bishops, guided by experts in the bureaucracy, actually had a hand in writing it, he fears it reflects a troubling slippage of theological seriousness. Theology is replaced by the ever so familiar "ideological landmarks" of feminism. The drafting group seemed to be quite selective in deciding who was worth listening to. "Cordelia's silence," writes Mankowski, "is one of the loudest messages of this document." The result is a "severe reductivism" that treats religious realities in terms of political agendas. Thus, in discussing "women publicly consecrated to virginity," the draft says: "Their witness stands out precisely because many achieved a certain autonomy with respect to men, a certain 'emancipation' and a self-direction in pursuit of the spiritual life, advanced studies, and apostolic works." Mankowski comments: "In this view, the witness of holy virgins is not witness to Christ; they are not to be esteemed because they followed Jesus more closely or heroically, but because they were 'emancipated,' because they effected a *political* good."

Or consider this from the draft: "Women contribute beyond measure to carrying forward Christ's redemptive mission in the world. Witness their efforts to preserve and enhance the earth and the earth's resources, to take action against oppression, to demand human rights, just treatment for all, and an end to war." Mankowski comments: "Setting aside the tendentious tone of that passage and its frankly silly level of generalization, it disappoints most in its instantiation of Christ's redemptive mission: no mention of sin, no suffering, no atonement. Redemption, it would seem, is effected by a kind of Green Party activism."

In its tireless repetitiousness about the sin of "sexism," the draft insists that this sin be recognized in the very *structure* of the Church. Archbishop Rembert Weakland of Milwaukee issued among the earliest calls for withdrawing the draft because it did not go far enough—presumably because it did not call for the ordination of women to the priesthood. Mankowski, who holds quite different views on ordaining women, agrees with Weakland that it would have been much better if the writers of the pastoral came right out and said what they mean by lamenting the sins of sexism in a hierarchical church. The draft declared: "We must undertake an examination of practices, possessions, power structures, and lifestyles found within our own house that prevent the proper advancement of women." Mankowski finds it odd that bishops should accept as self evident that the ministries of the Church, in service to the People of God, should be described as "power structures."

The bishops, embarrassed by their own authority, are touchingly eager to be forgiven that authority. But they will not be forgiven by those to whom they are most earnestly listening. Msgr. Thomas Herron of Philadelphia is quoted as saying, "No episcopal document can be expected to satisfy those who reject the right of bishops to speak on this issue in the first place." Mankowski applauds the candor of Archbishop Weakland because he makes explicit the confession that the drafters fudge, namely, "that they uphold the Catholic teaching on the priesthood *under constraint*, and for no other reason." "Weakland makes it clear that the ardors that were dampened by this document (and which we may presume he shares) are not going to be appeased by halfway measures such as calls for inclusive language, altar girls, or diocesan 'commissions on the rights of women.' "

Mankowski's final observations on the draft are withering: "The story has been told before, but the moral bears repeating: you can never really dialogue with a Goneril, you can only trade places; and Reganomics [sic] makes no provision for buying esteem on the cheap. 'One in Christ Jesus' might well stand as an object lesson on how *not* to compose an episcopal document, but the happiest outcome is that it be gently steered into a tardy but well-deserved oblivion. Lear's folly does not play well as theological vaudeville. Souls are at stake."

Bishops Losing Control

So the draft has been withdrawn and Father Mankowski should be happy, right? Not entirely. And that is because he believes that what happened with this pastoral letter reflects a deeper problem: the bishops are losing control over their teaching function in the Church. He cites the late Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar who remarked, "The decentralization of the Roman Curia has led directly to the curialization of the diocese." Not only the diocese, but also national bishops conferences, Mankowski adds. He notes that the U.S. Catholic Conference and National Conference of Catholic Bishops employ 292 people in the central headquarters in Washington. This results, predictably, in an uncontrolled gushing of documentation. From 1982 through 1988, the NCCB published 226 papers—44 in the past year alone. Of course not all of these are authoritative teaching documents, but they are issued in the name of the bishops. There can hardly be one bishop out of the nearly 400, suggests Mankowski, who has even read all that is being said in his name. If the bishops don't

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pay attention, little wonder that their statements are ignored by the laity.

Protestant Christians, especially those in the oldline/mainline churches, have long been familiar with the problems of politicized church bureaucracies—problems that have developed somewhat later in American Catholicism. In the Roman Catholic Church, these problems raise different questions—or raise the same questions in different ways—because of Catholicism's theological claims for the teaching authority of the episcopacy, and because of the bishops' accountability to Rome. Social scientists tend to be skeptical of the ability of theological claims to withstand the force of sociological dynamics, such as the dynamic of bureaucratization. Nonetheless, and whatever all the reasons for withdrawing the draft of "One in Christ Jesus," it does give evidence of an ability to resist a development in which bureaucratic process had quite thoroughly overwhelmed theological substance. We trust Father Mankowski takes heart from the withdrawal, even if the non-publication of his article means that he cannot claim a measure of credit for it.

FT

RELIGION VS. RELIGIOUS FREEDOM

Most churches are rightly cautious when it comes to intervening in the political process. Among the good reasons for such caution are the dangers of politicizing the Christian community and distracting attention from what is central to the churches' spiritual mission. Among the very bad reasons for such caution is that churches are intimidated by tax laws or fearful of engaging questions that may be "controversial." Operating by such bad reasons, churches end up by exercising self-censorship. Albeit inadvertently, they also reinforce a restrictive reading of "the separation of church and state" that sharply limits the freedom of religion in our public life.

Numerous examples, Protestant and Catholic, might be cited. There is, for instance, this: "Guidelines for Pastors and Parishes on Lobbying and Electioneering" recently issued by the Indiana Catholic Conference. The guidelines note that "abortion has once again become a focal point of human rights efforts." That is immediately followed by the statement, "But abortion is not the only issue facing the people of Indiana." The "consistent ethic of life demands concern for . . . not just the unborn." Church people, we are told, are involved in "many issues" of great (equal?) importance. The guidelines specify some of those issues: agricultural workers, capital punishment, criminal justice, housing, parochial schools, pornography, and sex education.

It is a truism to say that Christians are concerned about many issues. However, those who recognize the singularity of the abortion question—both in terms of the weight of church teaching and of the horror protested—cannot help but see the Indiana guidelines as a discouragement of prolife activities. Whether or not that was the intention of the Catholic Conference, the guidelines sharply relativize the urgency of the prolife cause. Needless to say, there are many people, Catholic and other, who think that is a very good thing to do. It is hard to believe that the bishops of Indiana agree with them.

At least as troubling is the suggestion of the guidelines that "constitutionality and related matters" require the neutering of the Church's witness on issues of moral moment in the political arena. Whether statements be from the pulpit or in handbills and "educational" materials, the numerous strictures in the guidelines aim at making sure that the Church is not perceived to be taking sides. When in doubt, pastors and parishes are repeatedly urged to consult the lawyers of the diocese or Catholic Conference. Again, religious groups are well advised, as a general rule, to avoid political partisanship—but not because the Constitution prohibits their active engagement in public debate, nor because they might get in trouble with the IRS. It is appropriate at times to consult the lawyers, but one would like to think that the church consults somewhat higher authorities when it comes to defining its public responsibilities.

The three great imperatives advanced by the Indiana guidelines are: Learn about Candidates and Issues, Support the Candidates of Your Choice, Vote and Encourage Others to Vote. All very good, to be sure, but for this we need the church? With respect to the teaching of moral imperatives, the League of Women Voters says as much. The timidity of the Indiana guidelines is excused, and even depicted as being mandatory, because the law forbids religiously sponsored advocacy in the public arena. That misunderstanding of American law is usually pressed by the ACLU. It is more than a little surprising to see it endorsed, even implicitly, by bishops of the Catholic Church.

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THE IMMUTABLE REBELS

Father Richard McBrien, chairman of theology at the University of Notre Dame, is quite possibly the most quoted Catholic priest in America. Hardly a week

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passes without the major papers and newsweeklies running a story on some Catholic development of which their reporters and editors disapprove. The by-now predictable story lines have to do with the bishops' alleged interference in public policy (usually related to abortion) or with the Vatican's alleged suppression of deviant theologians. And hardly a story passes without an equally predictable quote from Notre Dame's McBrien, asserting that the bishops and the Vatican are lamentably out of touch with reality.

Father McBrien is by no means alone. A significant sector of an older generation of Catholic academics adopted as young men a mode of dissent that has now become immutable. It started in the heady days of the Second Vatican Council and was powerfully influenced by the 1960s cultural climate of polymorphous revolutionisms. Over the subsequent decades, striking the pose of bold rebellion has become a very tired act. But that is the main thing that some of these folk have done with their professional lives; perhaps it is all that they know how to do. Their identity is dependent upon their serving as foils to officialdom. Their services are much in demand by a secular press that is determined to persuade us that bishops and pope do not accurately represent Catholicism. Critics of Catholicism's clamoring recreants say that they just like to have their names in print and their faces on the talk shows, but that strikes us as both wrong and uncharitable. It is to suggest that they are driven chiefly by vanity.

A recent article in *Vanity Fair* offers a better insight into the behavior of Father McBrien and his *confreres*. The article, by a Leslie Bennetts, is titled "The Holy Terror of Cardinal O'Connor," and is an all-out slashing assault on the archbishop of New York. As is typically the case in this genre, the author's rage is directed at the Cardinal's abiding by church teaching on abortion and the homosexual "lifestyle." Abandoning any pretense of professional journalism, Ms. Bennetts informs the reader that O'Connor is a "fanatic" and a "religious zealot" who thinks that he alone understands God's will and is determined to impose that understanding on everyone else. "O'Connor is not only a fanatic, in the sense that any religious zealot unquestioningly committed to a rigid set of beliefs is a fanatic; he is the most effective and therefore the most dangerous kind of fanatic—warm, personable, humorous, eminently reasonable in conversation, and extremely skillful at manipulating the media." His skills didn't succeed with Ms. Bennetts, however. She wasn't fooled by the Cardinal's being so unfanatical.

Vanity Fair's extended vilification ends with a longish quote from, of course, Notre Dame's Richard McBrien. His comments on "the dinosaurs" of contemporary Catholicism are not limited to Cardinal O'Connor but include John Paul II, Joseph Cardinal Ratzinger, and the entire "crowd" now in office. What he says reflects not only arrested development in the rebellious mode but also, we must believe, his own sincerely held understanding of the church, of history, and of his place in both. "History is very unkind to the crowd that's in now," says McBrien. "They're the villains of history; they're the ones who tried to stop progress. The reactionaries are never heroes. It's the innovators, the people who break new ground and have new ideas, that are the heroes of history. The crowd that's running things now has been around for centuries. They're always burning books and sending people off to prison, banning things and denouncing people to hell. But years down the road, we don't remember the persecutors. Who remembers the idiots who punished Galileo? Everyone remembers Galileo. History eventually takes its revenge on people who try to reverse it. O'Connor is a bishop of a church that no longer exists. He's behind his time. He'd have been a terrific archbishop of New York in the 1950s. The problem is that it's the 1990s."

It is a statement both piquant and pathetic. The insouciant confidence in historical progress is reminiscent of an earlier Protestant liberalism. The pose of daring young innovator must be increasingly hard to maintain twenty-five years later, on the far side of middle age. But, as Father McBrien might say, his duty is to keep the faith. The Catholic faith is meant, of course, but, more obviously, faith in the scenario of an ever more progressive church in which he and his bold band are the vanguard of inevitable and radical change. It is not an easy faith to keep as that scenario recedes ever farther into the past. Sympathy is in order for the immutable rebels who must now seek out the company even of the declared enemies of the church in order to vent their bitterness about a vision of Catholicism that was not to be. History has not been kind to them.

FT

EXPLODING VOLUNTARISM

When in the 1970s there began to be much discussion about "mediating structures" and voluntarism, when Ronald Reagan urged us to rely on government less and on ourselves more, when George Bush talked about a "thousand points of light," those of a statist mind-set groused that it was all a scheme to cut back on government social services. Anyway, they added, there is no way that voluntary action could substitute for massively funded government programs. The complainers had a point and have a point. No doubt much boosting of voluntarism is thinly disguised

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bashing of government. And no doubt there are things that are best done through government programs (although only a very short list readily comes to mind). Few people are seriously talking about dismantling the welfare state.

All that said, there has in fact been a dramatic increase in the voluntary service sector in the last decade. Peter F. Drucker, one of the world's most respected management experts, notes that surge, and goes on to underscore the ways in which voluntarism is moving from "helping out" the management to becoming the management. He writes, "Few people are aware that the non-profit sector is by far America's largest employer. Every other adult--a total of 80 million-plus people—works as a volunteer, giving on average nearly five hours each week to one or several nonprofit organizations. This is equal to 10 million full-time jobs. Were volunteers paid, their wages, even at minimum rate, would amount to some $150 billion, or 5 percent of the gross national product. And volunteer work is changing fast. To be sure, what many do requires little skill or judgment: collecting in the neighborhood for the Community Chest one Saturday afternoon a year, chaperoning youngsters selling Girl Scout cookies door to door, driving old people to the doctor. But more and more volunteers are becoming 'unpaid staff,' taking over the professional and managerial tasks in their organizations." Drucker may be too generous in his estimate of the role that the churches and synagogues of America are playing in this "management revolution," but religious leaders have reason to pay attention to his call for the upgrading of voluntarism. "This move from nonprofit volunteer to unpaid professional may be the most important development in American society today. We hear a great deal about the decay and dissolution of family and community and about the loss of values. And, of course, there is reason for concern. But the nonprofits are generating a powerful countercurrent. They are forging new bonds of community, a new commitment to active citizenship, to social responsibility, to values. And surely what the nonprofit contributes to the volunteer is as important as what the volunteer contributes to the nonprofit. Indeed, it may be fully as important as the service, whether religious, educational, or welfare related, that the nonprofit provides in the community."

FT

He Only Kills His Friends

The Dutch Association for Voluntary Euthanasia hosted the eighth biennial conference of the World Federation of Right to Die Societies a few months ago. American euthanists were there in force, saying they had come to the Dutch "paradise" to learn how to advance the cause in the U.S. The German right-to-diers boycotted the meeting. They claim that if physicians are allowed to kill people, even at the patient's request, "it would come to the point of the Nazis in the past." The German group favors "self-administered" euthanasia, usually by means of cyanide. A Dutch pioneer of earlier dying pointed out to the conference the economic benefits. The cost of the barbiturates and curare needed to kill a patient in Holland is only five guilders (about $2.50). "If the patient had lived a day longer, that would have cost 500 guilders," he noted. Dr. H. S. Cohen, another Dutch practitioner, explained that euthanasia is not only a part of good medical care "but should be considered a part of good spiritual care." "It's never too early to think about euthanasia," he explained, urging that the subject be taught, along with voting rights and contraception, in high schools. He believes that Dutch doctors possess a "high integrity which is not corruptible." As evidence of this, he observed, "I can't think of any case in which a doctor has been accused of taking money for doing something a doctor would not have done anyway." In Holland, Cohen noted, patients and doctors are friends. When euthanasia critics accuse him of killing people, he said he always responds, "Well, I only kill my friends." The next conference of the World Federation of Right to Die Societies is scheduled for 1991 in Japan.

FT

Killing and Compassion

William F. May of Southern Methodist University isn't buying into the agitations for mercy killing. He thinks that how we treat the elderly along the way to their end has a lot to do with the credibility of claims that it is compassion that moves us to hasten their end. "It is a huge irony and, in some cases, hypocrisy to talk suddenly about a compassionate killing when the aging and dying may have been starved for compassion for many years. To put it bluntly, a country has not earned the moral right to kill for mercy unless it has already sustained and supported life mercifully. Otherwise we kill for compassion only to reduce the demands on our compassion." May allows that he can imagine extreme

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circumstances in which he hopes he would have the "courage" to put someone out of his misery. "But hard cases do not always make good laws or wise social policies. Regularized mercy killings would too quickly relieve the community of its obligation to provide good care. Further, we should not always expect the law to provide us with full protection and coverage for what, in rare circumstances, we may morally need to do. Sometimes the moral life calls us out into a no-man's-land where we cannot expect total security and protection under the law. But no one said that the moral life is easy." He might have added that the "security and protection" that many seek in the law is not only, not even mainly, immunity from punishment. Legality, in the confused thinking of some, is equivalent to a societally bestowed absolution for doing what they otherwise know to be wrong. May correctly underscores, however, that the limits of law are such that it can never exhaustively cover every moral duty. The "right to die" and "death with dignity" proposals, while appealing to excruciatingly painful individual cases, would have, if they carry the day, what May calls a "cumulative impact" upon social policy and attitudes. In the name of compassion, they excuse our lack of compassion.

FT

Judicial Restraint on Teen Abortions

On the Supreme Court Justice Antonin Scalia has been the most straightforward in arguing that *Roe v. Wade* is fundamentally wrong in claiming that there is a constitutional right to abortion, and that the Court is fundamentally wrong in trying to devise an abortion code to be applied to all the states. In a separate opinion in *Hodgson v. Minnesota* a few months ago, he argued the latter proposition with particular force. The Court upheld a Minnesota law requiring that parents be notified when a minor seeks an abortion, but providing for court permission ("judicial bypass") when there are compelling reasons for the parents not to be notified. Scalia notes that the justices are all over the map in coming up with this decision. "As I understand the various opinions today: One Justice holds that two-parent notification is unconstitutional (at least in the present circumstances) without judicial bypass, but constitutional with bypass; four Justices would hold that two-parent notification is constitutional with or without bypass; four Justices would hold that two-parent notification is unconstitutional with or without bypass, though the four apply two different standards; six Justices hold that one-parent notification with bypass is constitutional, though for two different sets of reasons; and three Justices would hold that one-parent notification with bypass is unconstitutional." With more than a hint of exasperation, Scalia concludes: "One will search in vain the document we are supposed to be construing for text that provides the basis for the argument over these distinctions; and will find in our society's tradition regarding abortion no hint that the distinctions are constitutionally relevant, much less any indication how a constitutional argument about them ought to be resolved. The random and unpredictable results of our consequently unchanneled individual views make it increasingly evident, Term after Term, that the tools for this job are not to be found in the lawyer's—and hence not in the judge's—workbox. I continue to dissent from this enterprise of devising an Abortion Code, and from the illusion that we have authority to do so."

FT

Censorship for Everyone

Peter Steinfels, writing in the *New York Times*, ponders the rash of recent disputes over censorship. There are the cases of filthy-mouthed rock groups, anti-black comedians, Andy Rooney's observations about homosexuality, anti-sexist gag rules on prestige campuses, and of course the famous battle over government subsidies for the arts.

On the last, Steinfels was talking with another New York writer and the subject turned to government support for Andres Serrano's notorious photograph of a crucifix submerged in urine. This writer of Swiftian bent came up with a proposal for a "urine test" approach to questions of religion and the First Amendment. "If you have a plain Christmas crèche," she noted, "it violates the First Amendment to pay for it with taxpayers' money. But if an artist submerges the entire crèche in urine, it violates the First Amendment to forbid paying for it with taxpayers' money." Steinfels says the proposal is absurd but instructive. It is absurd, but it is also an accurate reflection of the arguments advanced by the putative defenders of artistic freedom.

Steinfels makes a point that should be obvious but obviously isn't. It is a quite natural and healthy thing, he writes, that our society should be involved in debates over what is obscene. "A country indifferent to such a question would probably be a country that no longer cherished any beliefs deeply enough to care whether they were transgressed. Or it

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would be a country so monolithic and complacent in its mores that affronting them was unimaginable."

Steinfels does not suggest that we are going to reach unanimous agreement on what is or is not obscene, but he does think it possible that we might get a better grip on what these debates are about. "Almost everyone and every group holds some principle, some symbol, some memory, some relationship so dear that deriding or expropriating it is terribly painful. Perhaps when we evaluate what is agitating others, the first test should be to substitute whatever matters so intensely to us that any assault on it merits the word 'obscene.' This will not resolve today's complex questions of free speech, community standards, and government subsidies. But it would be an exercise in sympathy, and thus hold the chance for at least partial understanding." That, it might be observed, represents the kind of reasonableness that used to be called liberalism.

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BLACK ROLE MODELS

There is this excitement at Harvard Law School about the need for a black woman law professor who can serve as a role model for black women students. *The New Republic* says the need is "desperate" and regrets that "there just aren't enough appropriate role models to go around." Julius Lester, who teaches literature at the University of Massachusetts and is himself black, is not buying. He writes: "If Frederick Douglass had waited for a black role model, he would have remained in slavery. If W. E. B. DuBois had waited for a black role model, he would have never left Great Barrington, Massachusetts. There was a time in American black history when parents held up whites as appropriate role models for their children, telling them, 'You can not only do what he does, you can do better!'

"For *TNR* to imply that people are able to identify only with those of their race means that no black can be held up as a role model for a white child. The physiological compartmentalizing of America will continue until we have the overweight, underweight, left-handed, bald, and those with overbite demanding appropriate role models in positions of power and authority. When that happens, unfortunately, there will be those who will take them seriously." The point about not being able to hold up a black as a role model for white children is, we think, particularly poignant. In a world where there is no escaping the fact that achievement is overwhelmingly defined and exemplified by whites (a dubious category, that), trendy racialisms put blacks and others who aspire to excellence into an impossible bind. Thus the rapturous promotion of Nelson Mandela as a role model for American blacks, clearly suggesting that the course of black achievement is in overthrowing the white oppressor. In this way, as Glenn Loury argued in these pages (June/July), black identity and dignity remain pitiably derivative. In this way, too, whites and blacks who are opposed to restructuring society on racialist premises find themselves pilloried as racists. Most whites can afford to chuck the whole question, simply forgetting about race and its attendant politics of radical bluster and unabsolvable guilt. Pat Moynihan was a quarter century early with his talk about "benign neglect," and it's no surprise that now the neglect is not always so benign. Of course, it is not so easy to forget about race if one is black.

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WHILE WE'RE AT IT

■ Readers concerned about church-state relations (and we assume that is the great majority of our readers) will want to pay special note to an extremely important conference planned for Philadelphia, May 30 to June 1, 1991. "A Bicentennial Conference on the Status of the Religion Clauses of the First Amendment" has a formidable array of sponsors, including the American Academy of Religion, the American Bar Association, the Christian Legal Society, the National Association of Evangelicals, the National Council of Churches, the Synagogue Council of America, and the United States Catholic Conference. The speakers include most of the major players in ongoing debates about law and religion in public life, many of them well known to the readers of this journal: Sam Rabinove, Dean Kelley, John M. Swomley, Michael McConnell, Robert Michaelson, William Bentley Ball, Edward Gaffney, Jeffrey Hadden, Robert Destro, Mary Ann Glendon, Sandra Day O'Connor, and your editor. There are 400 places for participants, and a place can be reserved by preregistration with $20 sent to Michael Woodruff, Christian Legal Society, 4208 Evergreen Lane, Suite 222, Annandale, VA 22003.

■ Readers send us the strangest things. Here, for instance, is an item from the "Personals" running in *The Nation*. "VIGOROUS MALE SOCIALIST, 60, seeking female friendship, intelligent rather than cerebral, strong yet vulnerable." And another: "MALE, 64, WHO DISLIKES GEORGE would like to meet female who dislikes Barbara." The argument might be made that any identity is better than none, but it strikes us that these people are truly desperate.

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■ In 1988, political scientist Guenter Lewy stirred up a salutary debate with his book *Peace and Revolution*. The study is a critique of pacifism and pacifist organizations in recent agitations about war and peace. Now Michael Cromartie has edited a splendid 275-page book on the questions raised by Lewy, *Peace Betrayed? Essays on Pacifism and Politics*. Contributors include George Weigel, John Swomley, James Finn, James Turner Johnson, Stanley Hauerwas, and William McGurn. Richard J. Mouw of Fuller Theological Seminary says, "This is a superb discussion. The intense debate over how best to interpret the past two decades of pacifist activity is both provocative and instructive. There are important lessons here for all who care deeply about the complex challenges of peace-making." *Peace Betrayed?* is available for $18.50 from Ethics and Public Policy Center, 1030 Fifteenth Street N.W., Washington, D.C. 20005.

■ Throughout the late and unlamented Cold War, no religious organization so assiduously toed the Communist line as the Prague-based Christian Peace Conference. CPC had affiliates around the world, including the U.S. The American affiliate, dominated though it was by leaders who were touchingly eager to give the benefit of the doubt to "the other side," finally broke up over CPC's demand for unqualified servility to Soviet policies. Now the Working Committee of CPC has met and ousted some of the leaders who have fallen into disgrace as apologists for the oppression of the hated regimes of the past. The new leadership wants it understood, however, that "nothing would be more damaging to the integrity of CPC than to abandon or renounce or deny . . . our abiding and radical commitment to a social vision of society, and our belief that this is rooted in the gospel." It seems a little late to be worrying about the "integrity" of CPC. The new leadership says that CPC is no longer preoccupied with East-West issues but is a "global prophetic movement." The environment, the unjust distribution of world resources, and all that, don't you know. One wishes the weathervane prophets of CPC would quietly repent of their sins and then toddle off to some dark corner to spend their remaining days in self-mortification, thus sparing the rest of us the need to be embarrassed for them.

■ Through the ups and downs of church, state, party, and solidarities in Poland, Adam Michnik has been trying to make sense of it all. Writing in *The New Republic*, Michnik says that the euphoria over democracy has been succeeded by new tensions—for example the tension between advancing still fragile freedoms and always telling the truth. "We are doomed," he says, "to live in a state of tension, uncertainty, permanent risk." But that isn't all. He ends with something very much like a clarion call for moral integrity: "Still, it is not true that we know nothing. We are children of a certain tradition. And we know that this tradition does not permit us to renounce the truth with impunity. We are the children of the Judeo-Christian culture, and we know that this culture, which recommends loyalty toward the state, commands us to bend our knees only before God. We know, therefore, that we should put faithfulness to truth above participation in power. We know, by reaching for our roots, that the truth of politics resides, in the end, in the politics of truth; that every political order is polluted by the original sin of imperfection. We reject the belief in political utopia. We know that our future is an imperfect society, a society of ordinary people and ordinary conflicts—but, precisely for this reason, a society that must not renounce its ethical norms in the name of political illusions.

"Yes, it is true that we are helpless before the many ethical traps of contemporary politics. It is then that we reach out for the truth of our own roots, for the ethics of the power of the powerless, or simply for the Ten Commandments. The rest is lies, and has the bitter taste of hypocrisy."

Sources: On McBrien, *Vanity Fair*, August 1990. Drucker on voluntarism, *In Trust*, New Year 1990. On euthanasia among friends, *Our Sunday Visitor*, July 8, 1990. May on mercy killing, *Christian Century*, July 11-18, 1990. Steinfels on censorship, *New York Times*, July 7, 1990. Lester on black role models in *The New Republic*, July 2, 1990. On the CPC, Ecumenical Press Service, July 8, 1990. Michnik in *The New Republic*, July 2, 1990.

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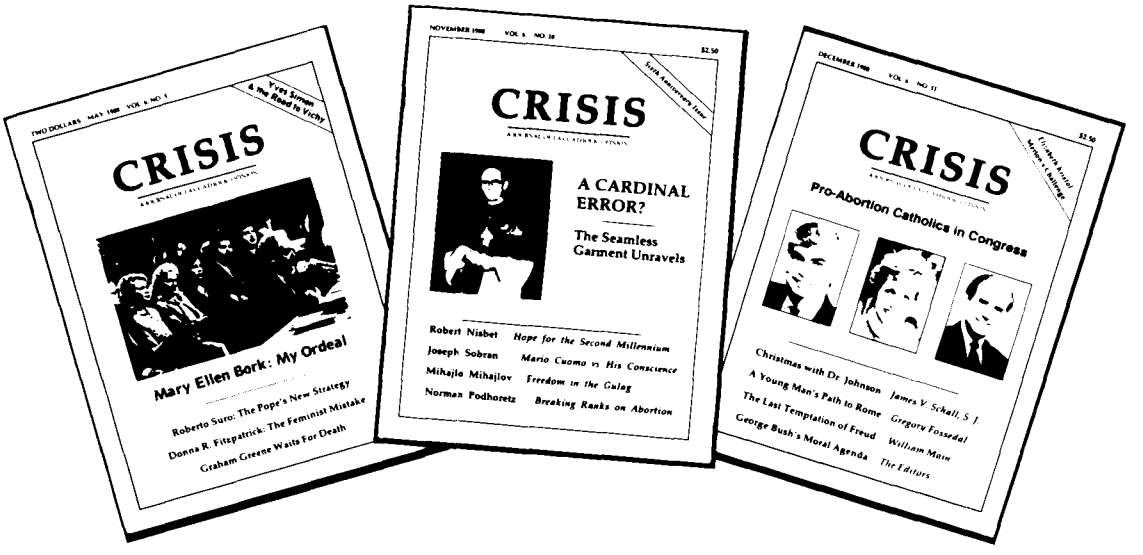
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FREEDOM AT ISSUE

For people who are committed to freedom

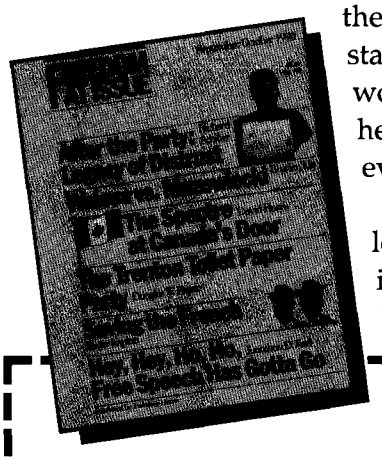
For nearly twenty years, **Freedom at Issue** has chronicled the challenges and threats to freedom around the world by offering a variety of perspectives on the crucial issues of our time and how they should be resolved. Our writers are engaged with policies that enhance freedom, often reporting directly from the field or struggling on behalf of their own causes.

Freedom at Issue, edited by James Finn, brings together the famous and the not yet famous, the philosopher and the reporter, the poet and the activist to dramatize and analyze the struggle for freedom in countries around the world. Wherever freedom is on the line, **Freedom at Issue** is there.

In recent issues, readers of **Freedom at Issue** have encountered:

- Milovan Djilas speaking on communism, religion and freedom: "The Communist society of today is decadent really and will become more and more decadent; the alternative is change."
- Roger Kaplan's irregular and irreverent "Letter from France," e.g., "Saving the French."
- A spirited exchange between George Weigel and Quentin L. Quade, sparked by the latter's review of Weigel's recent book on Catholicism and American democracy.
- Miriam London, Theodore X. Zhou and Oscar Handlin on China, "the human rights exception."
- James Finn on varied topics, such as "Frying Snowballs in Poland" and "Hey hey, ho ho, Western Civilization . . . and Eastern Europe."
- "From Tyranny to Democracy" by Ferdinand A. Hermens and "The Collapse of the Alternatives" by Michael Novak.
- Charles Morgan, Jr. hitting hard at the Supreme Court's recent qualification of equal justice under the law. "Once upon a time southern jury commissioners came forward and testified, 'Oh, no, we never intentionally excluded Negroes from jury duty.' Courts actually accepted that fairy tale."

In addition, **Freedom at Issue** provides a special feature: The Freedom House Comparative Survey of Freedom. This annual evaluation of the state of political rights and civil liberties around the world has become a standard reference work and a point of heated discussion every year.



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